

Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

POWER UP YOUR GAMING

Top accessories for your PS5, Xbox, Switch, PC or mobile

PLUS! KEY UPCOMING GAMES FOR ALL MAJOR PLATFORMS

SMARTEST SUNNIES
Upgrade your summer shades

ALSO INSIDE!
Our favourite ever iPods
Asus ROG Phone 6 rated
Sony's latest LinkBuds S earphones
Mario Strikers & Sonic Origins reviewed

Sharpen in-game audio

Beef up your play

Boost mobile gaming

Enhance your storage

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Get a mighty mouse

Upgrade your controls

Grab official extras



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08

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WELCOME



Hello and welcome to this gaming-themed issue of *Stuff*. Without significant new consoles hitting the streets in 2022, it's time to upgrade what you've got instead – so we've a mighty selection of accessories for PlayStation, Switch and Xbox (whether you've got one of the newer models or something slightly older), but we've also looked at add-ons for PC and mobile gaming.

And to top it off, we've a bumper selection of upcoming games for each platform – some crackers await as we move into the later part of the year. Mobile gamers will no doubt be interested in our review of the Asus ROG Phone 6, while our game reviews this issue are pretty tasty too, with in-depth looks at the *Sonic Origins* collection and the excellent *Mario Strikers*.

Elsewhere we've reviewed Sony's latest in-ears, the LinkBuds S, and checked out the Honor Magic4 Pro, plus there's a guide to the finest summer shades. We've also reminisced over our favourite ever iPods now that Apple's music player has been put out to pasture.

Hot Stuff covers some brilliant new products including Apple's latest MacBook Air, while the laptop theme continues with a whole extra section featuring notebook selections for every budget and need – from bargain Chromebooks to gaming powerhouses and premium performance lapwarmers. Enjoy the issue!

Dan Grabham, Editor-in-Chief / @dangrabham



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HOT STUFF

- 06 **The Hot Five**
Apple MacBook Air (M2)
Oh no, they've taken our fave laptop and... slightly improved it?
Lightyear 0
Oh yes, they've designed a car you can fuel up with sunlight
PerfectDraft Pro
Oh dear, they've combined smartphones and home drinking
Realme GT Neo 3
Oh wow, they've made a phone that charges in 4.6 nanoseconds
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THE LEGENDARY STUFF TOP TENS P73





Welcome to High-Fidelity



LSX II – The Definitive Compact Wireless HiFi

Welcome to a world of High-Fidelity sound that is true enough to touch. Designed by Michael Young in collaboration with KEF, the all-in-one speaker system LSX II is upgraded with the W2 wireless platform and enhanced DSP algorithm in the Music Integrity Engine to deliver a more balanced sound while updating usability with the KEF Connect App for ease of use. Play anything with all-inclusive connectivity.

AirPlay 2, Chromecast, Spotify, Tidal, MQA, HDMI and more.

Listen and believe

KEF 60
YEARS

H O T S T

Thumber night city

There's a nice big trackpad and the keyboard has Touch ID, so you can log in and pay for stuff using one of your digits, rather than having to remember a load of them.

HOT
FIVE
#1

THE THINNER TAKES IT ALL

Apple MacBook Air (M2)

In the same way that dog owners often end up looking like their pooches (seriously, a psychologist at the University of California proved it in a study), eventually all Apple stuff starts to look the same. Latest to get the flatter, more angular makeover is the MacBook Air, which has been reduced in volume by 20%. It's now just 11.3mm thick and weighs a smidge over 1.2kg.

But what's inside certainly hasn't been reduced, with a new eight-core M2 chip that Apple reckons is around 20% faster than the old M1, plus a beefier GPU. You can have up to 24GB of RAM and 2TB of storage, although that will add a full grand to the price – and while it does support 67W speedy charging, even for that much money you still don't get the necessary adapter in the box.

Display-wise, it's the same 500-nit 13.6in Liquid Retina screen that's been used in the MacBook Pro, but with thinner bezels. It's still not exactly packed with ports, with just a couple of Thunderbolts that double up as USB-Cs, plus MagSafe for charging on one side and a lesser-spotted 3.5mm socket on the other. Could this be the new top dog of the laptop world?

As hot as... the Dulux dog in a steam bath
from £1249 / apple.com



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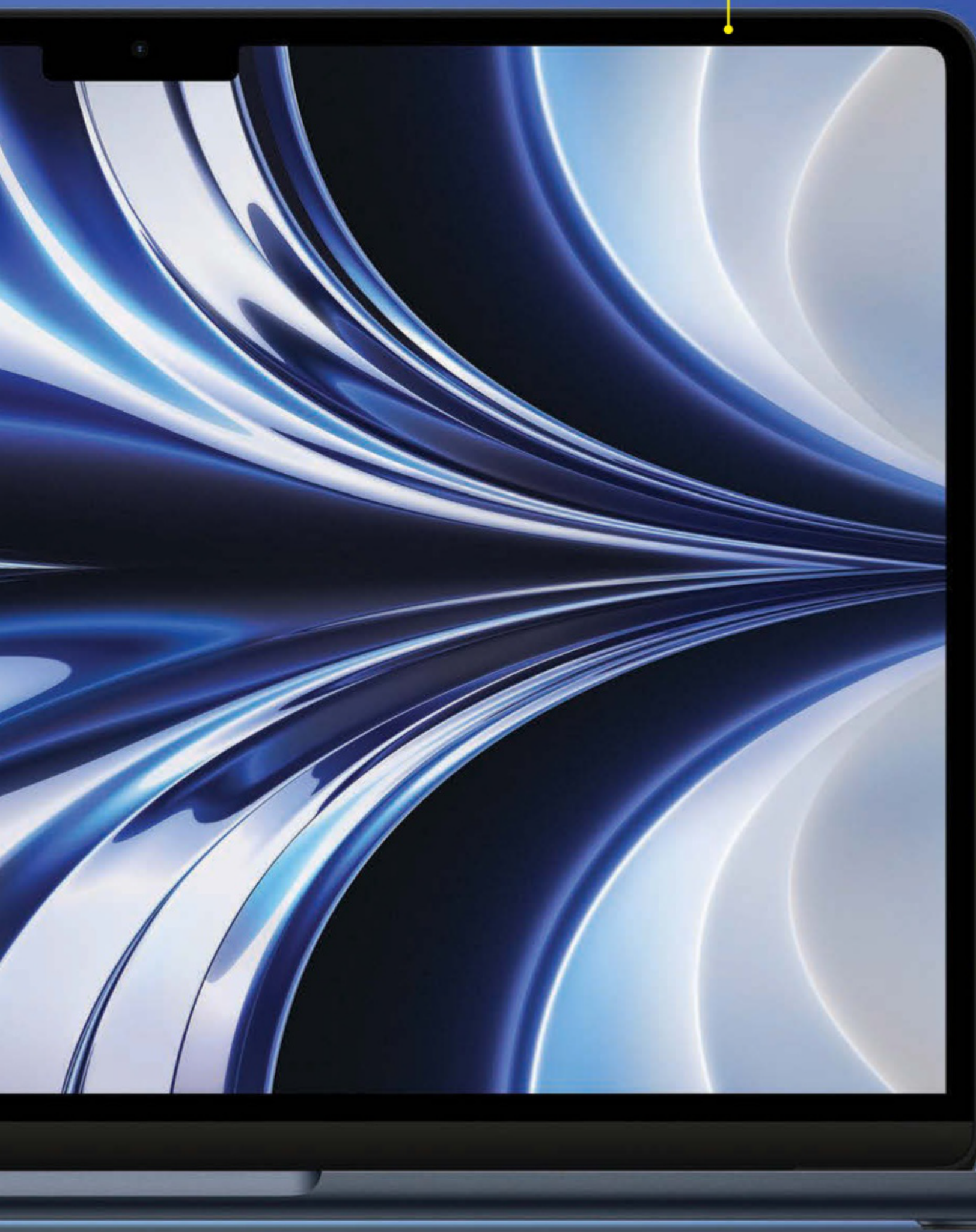
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ALL THE
BIGGEST
STORIES FROM
PLANET TECH



Laptop
frenzy
p89



ALSO NEW...



LG GRAM

With four different screen sizes – from 14in to 17in – LG's latest Gram caters for almost any bag, but they're all less than 18mm thick and come with Intel's 12th-gen silicon.

from £1200 / lg.com



DELL XPS 13

The XPS 13 has long been one of the best laptops not to wear an Apple logo, and Dell has given its ultraportable a major makeover for 2022, including latest-gen Intel processors.

from £949 / dell.com



MICROSOFT SURFACE LAPTOP GO 2

In the more affordable zone, Microsoft's 12.4in Surface Laptop Go 2 now has a faster 11th-gen Intel chip with Iris XE graphics.

from £529 / microsoft.com

**Stay on
these loads**

You can plug the Lightyear 0 into a standard wall socket and add 300km of range overnight, or 32km in an hour. The sun is not so efficient, taking 2hrs to give you 20km.

**The giving
daylights**

The interior is made from naturally sourced materials like plant-based leather and recycled PET, while Lightyear has used reclaimed carbon fibre for the body panels.



Tech on me

Lightyear hasn't forgotten about the inside. There's a 10.1in touchscreen that's powered by Android Automotive, plus cameras for both side and rear views.

HOT FIVE #2

THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES ON E.V.

Lightyear 0

With energy bills now reading like Elon Musk's bank statements, even running an electric car is getting expensive. But what if just leaving your motor out on the drive could recharge its battery?

The Lightyear 0 has five square metres of solar panels embedded in the roof and bonnet, so its makers reckon you should be able to do your daily commute for up to seven months without having to plug it in (although it'll help if you live in Seville rather than Stockport).

Pull up at the lights next to a Tesla and the five-seater's 0-62 time of 10secs and top speed of 100mph won't put up much of a fight, but it's designed for efficiency, not speed. Despite being 5m long it weighs just 1575kg and has a record-breaking drag coefficient of less than 0.19 – you can even get aero covers for the rear wheels that add up to 12km of range.

The first of an initial 946-car run will be on the road in November (just in time for, er, winter), with a much cheaper €30,000 second model due in late 2024 – by which time we'll probably all be fighting over fuel like something from *Mad Max*. Perfect timing, then.

As hot as... breaking down in the Outback from €250,000 / lightyear.one





I shall be freezing

Nobody likes waiting for warm beer to cool down, but the PerfectDraft Pro can take 10hrs to have yours ready to drink – so make sure you load it up well in advance.

HOT FIVE #3

IT'S ALL COLDER NOW, BABY BREW

PerfectDraft Pro

Everybody's dreamed of living in a pub, but the expectation and the reality don't necessarily match up. You might imagine every day would be like an episode of *Cheers*, but you'd probably spend more time cleaning up vomit, ejecting underage drinkers and listening to one of the regulars talk about his favourite traction engines (again). No, you're better off taking the best part of pub life – the ready supply of beer – and adding it to your current gaff.

The PerfectDraft Pro has an iOS and Android app that lets you control the beer's temperature (with a notification when it's cold enough to drink) and check how fresh it is – and will warn you when you're running low. Its Smart Pour tech should help you to avoid pulling a pint of foam, and you can order new kegs to suit all tastes, from crowd-pleasing lagers to craft creations from the likes of Tiny Rebel, BrewDog and Goose Island.

The app will also tell you when the machine needs an MOT – and considering how much you're likely to use it, that might come sooner than expected.

Ashot as... your kitchen at last orders
£385 / perfectdraft.com





Don't clink twice, it's all right

The 6L kegs are all made from recyclable aluminium. PerfectDraft's Beer Hawk delivery service will collect your empties and credit you with £5 per keg in beer tokens.

Glowin' in the wind

With its brushed metal finish and LED display, the PerfectDraft Pro should fit in nicely next to your fancy coffee machine. Just don't get them mixed up at 7:30am.



HOT
FIVE
#4

MY DART IS PUMPING TO A BRAND NEW FEAT

Realme GT Neo 3

Have you ever seen a hedgehog run? Those spiny little blighters are surprisingly fast considering the length of their legs...

but if Sonic's brethren have taught us anything, it's not to make assumptions based on appearance. So while the Realme GT Neo 3 might look like just another mid-range smartphone, those go-faster stripes provide a clue that things are not

all as they seem. It's loaded with Realme's latest 150W Ultra Dart charging tech, which means you can fuel up the battery to 50% in just 5mins, with a full top-up taking less than 20.

Some people take longer than that just to find their charger in the first place. The fun doesn't stop when you unplug it either, with a Dimensity 8100 5G and 12GB of RAM providing the grunt.

On the camera front, its 50MP main snapper gets optical and electronic image stabilisation, and image processing courtesy of the CPU's dedicated Imagiq 780 engine – so even at top speed you should still be able to get a decent snap of any passing hedgehogs.

As hot as... the hedgehog 110m hurdles

£599 / realme.com

H O T S T U F F

Amazing case

A £180 limited-edition black version of the EXP is also on the way; this will include a hard case, poster, keyring and certificate of authenticity...and, most importantly, a second game cartridge.



HOT
FIVE
#5

HOW GREAT THOU R-TYPE Evercade EXP

Nostalgia's not as good as it used to be, is it? Sure, you might be able to download pretty much any game from your childhood within seconds these days, but playing on your new PS5 controller or using an iPad's touchscreen just isn't the same. If you really want to get the retro juices flowing you'll want to pick up Evercade's new EXP handheld.

As well as using physical multi-game cartridges – none of this new-fashioned download nonsense – it has a special Tate mode with dedicated buttons so you can spin the console 90° to play games like *Centipede*, *Mysterious Stones* and

Burger Time vertically, just as the ancient gaming gods intended.

Evercade has also dealt with its original handheld's shortcomings, so there are now L2 and R2 trigger buttons, the 4.3in display uses IPS tech for better viewing angles, and there's built-in Wi-Fi for speedy updates plus USB-C for easy charging. The internals have been beefed up too, with a 1.5GHz processor and 4GB of memory.

What to play? The EXP will come with the Irem Arcade 1 cartridge, which includes *R-Type* and *Moon Patrol*. Say no more.

Ashot as... the fires in *The Ignition Factor*
£130 / evercade.co.uk

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GAME WITHOUT FRONTIERS

MSI Titan GT77

from £3899 / uk.msi.com

Ridiculous power and gamer-friendly design make this laptop a genuine desktop replacement

● Wedge hammer

If you're going to call something a Titan you'd better be sure it's got the specs to match, otherwise it's a bit like having a pet beagle called Killer. But MSI wasn't messing about when it drew up the spec list for its Titan GT77. Effectively a gaming PC in portable form, it has a 12th-gen Intel Core i9-12900HX processor along with a GeForce RTX 3080 Ti graphics card, a 17.3in 120Hz 4K screen and up to 128GB of RAM. This thing should slice through AAA games like a steak knife through jelly.

● Don't div up

MSI's OverBoost tech means it's capable of delivering a whopping 250W of power, so both the CPU and GPU can run at full tilt simultaneously rather than one being sacrificed to feed the other. That much grunt is likely to produce enough heat to fry an egg, so MSI has also fitted it with four fans, seven heatpipes and six exhausts. All of this will come at the expense of battery life, and at 3.3kg it's hardly ideal for the commute, but what do you expect with all that oomph?

● Solsbury frill

Of course, it wouldn't be a gaming laptop without RGBs, so there's customisable lighting across the rear and the whole keyboard. The latter isn't just for show – you can illuminate individual keys to show the controls for the type of game you're playing. The QWERTY is a proper Cherry MX Ultra Low Profile mechanical job, which should make it ideal for intense fragging sessions, and you get plenty of ports, including two Thunderbolt 4, three USB-A, HDMI, Ethernet and a headphone socket. If you're after a high-end gaming rig that'll fit in a bag, look no further.

There's space inside the GT77 to fit four separate SSDs, which means up to 8TB of storage.

Laptop frenzy
p89





MORE NEW GAMING GEAR

● Razer Enki Pro

A top-end laptop deserves some top-end support for your buns. Razer's Enki Pro is swathed in Alcantara, which you'll more often find in sports cars than gaming dens. **£999 / razer.com**

● HyperX Cloud Mix

With a 2.4GHz wireless dongle and low-latency mode to make sure there's no lag while you frag, HyperX's Cloud Mix buds are ideal for gaming. There's even virtual surround sound. **£130 / hyperxgaming.com**

● Medion Erazer Beast X30

If the GT77 is out of your price range, Medion's 17.3in X30 also gets Intel's latest processors and Nvidia's latest GPUs. It's a whole kilo lighter too. **from £1800 / medion.com**

250W POWER
MEANS BOTH
CHIPS CAN
RUN AT FULL
TILT TOGETHER



Day sipper EMBER CUP

If you know your arabica from your robusta, you probably don't let your morning coffee hang around long enough to go cold; but if you need a bit of help remembering the difference between a lungo and a ristretto, there may well be times when you forget you've got a cup of joe on the go. Ember's latest self-heating receptacle caters for absent-minded coffee drinkers with a smaller, handleless 178ml form, but can still keep its contents warm for up to 90 minutes – or all day if you leave it sitting on the charging coaster. An accompanying app lets you pick your preferred temperature, as long as it lies between 50°C and 62.5°C, with a built-in LED to let you know when it gets there.

from £80 / ember.com



Bee here now BEELINE VELO 2

Unless you're the kind of cyclist who dresses head to toe in Lycra and wears those shoes that make you sound like a horse when you walk, a specialist bike computer like the ones made by Garmin or Hammerhead is probably overkill. Beeline's new Velo 2, however, could be right up your cycle lane. While the original Velo was essentially just a digital compass, the sequel adds a new, more detailed navigation interface and the ability to choose your route depending on how much of a hurry you're in to get there – but without losing the simplicity that made the first one such a joy to use. And with the ability to upload routes from Strava, it might even appeal to some of the clippy-cloppy Lycra crew.

£80 / global.beeline.co

This month's selection of new-to-streaming highlights includes Ryan Gosling missing his tram stop on the way home from work



Black Bird

Sentenced to 10 years in jail, Taron Egerton's former high-school football hero is offered a way out: enter a maximum-security prison, befriend a suspected serial killer and find out where he buried his victims. Can he elicit a confession and get out early, or will he be just another pawn for this sociopath? Don't expect any dance routines.

S1 / Apple TV+, 8 July



The Baby

Sky's new series gives childrearing the horror-comedy treatment. Natasha has never wanted a baby, but when one literally lands in her lap she's forced to take up the motherhood mantle. But this cute tot is malevolent and manipulative (what, even more than the real ones?), and soon dirty nappies are the least of Natasha's troubles.

S1 / Now/Sky, 7 July



Under The Banner Of Heaven

There's more than a hint of *True Detective* about this drama, with Andrew Garfield's devout Mormon cop investigating the murder of a woman and her child against a backdrop of church intrigue – well, you know how definitely-not-weird those Mormons are. It's all based on actual events.

S1 / Disney+, 27 July



Spider-Man: No Way Home

The best bit of Tom Holland's third Spidey film is a multiverse-related twist that you've probably had spoiled for you by now, but suffice to say *No Way Home* delivers everything you'd expect: thrills, spills, humour and big punch-ups. Popcorn-bucket entertainment at its most finely honed.

Film / Now/Sky, 15 July



This Much I Know To Be True

A must for fans of professional gloom-bringer Nick Cave and lovers of artfully shot music films, Andrew Dominik's exploration of the creative relationship between Cave and long-time musical partner Warren Ellis features scorching performances of songs from the pair's recent albums.

Film / MUBI, 8 July



Resident Evil

The survival horror video game has had seven live-action movie adaptations already but, like the T-Virus, it's constantly mutating and moving to a new host – in this case Netflix. This series aims to forge its own identity by setting itself in the future with all-new characters... but don't worry, you're still getting zombie dogs.

S1 / Netflix, 14 July



The Gray Man **Film / Netflix, 22 July**

Now you know why your Netflix subscription has gone up: *The Gray Man* had a \$200m budget, making it the streaming service's priciest original film yet. That money has gone a long way, though: not only does this action-thriller star Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans as warring assassins, but its extended cast includes Ana de Armas, Billy Bob Thornton and Regé-Jean Page (him off *Bridgerton*) – and its directors are the Russo brothers, best known for the final two *Avengers* movies.

S T R E A M



IT'LL HAVE
NO TROUBLE
REACHING THE
MAGIC 88MPH...
IN 4.35 SECONDS



DELOREAN ALPHA5

£tba / delorean.com

Great scott! A new DeLorean!

Yep, and with any luck this one won't be such a glorious failure. The Alpha5 is the first new DeLorean since the DMC-12, known for its starring role in *Back To The Future*, although it's worth pointing out that this car has nothing to do with the late John DeLorean. The new four-seater EV was designed by a Texas firm that bought the rights to the name back in 1995... but while

it might not be a true successor to the '80s classic, at least it still has those iconic gullwing doors.

But no Flux Capacitor?

DeLorean hasn't revealed the full details yet – look out for the public unveiling on 18 August – so let's not give up on the dream of time travel just yet. We know it'll have no trouble reaching the magic 88mph anyway – in fact it'll do it in 4.35secs and, presuming you

haven't jumped into a different dimension, go on to 155mph. That's some way short of the bonkers Plaid version of Tesla's Model S, but these numbers are just estimates for the 'base performance model', so there may be even nipper versions to come.

If it can't travel through time, how far can it go?

The Alpha5 has a 100kWh battery and a projected range of over 300

miles, although obviously that will depend on how you drive it. Curvier and sleeker than the DMC-12, it was designed in conjunction with Giugiaro's Italdesign, the Turin-based company behind such timeless classics as the Lotus Esprit, the original Bugatti Chiron concept and the, er, Fiat Uno. There's no word on pricing yet, but it's not due to go into production until 2024. If only we had a time machine...



Yankee doordle dandy ULTION NUKI

There are lots of differences between the UK and America – tipping isn't a big thing here, we don't have to pay to be ill, and we spell aluminium properly – but you might not realise our doors are different too. That makes a lot of smart locks incompatible with British houses... but not the Ultion Nuki. It fits to the inside in just five minutes, with no drilling, wiring or calibration required, and works with all the major smart home platforms so you can use your phone, smartwatch, voice assistant or good old-fashioned key to get in. Oh, and Ultion is so sure of its new lock that it'll give you £2000 if somebody burgles your gaff by breaking it.

Challenge accepted?

£239 / ultion-lock.co.uk



A revolution 'bout talkin' SENNHEISER TV CLEAR

If you sometimes struggle to understand what people on telly are saying, it might just be because you've tuned into S4C and you're not Welsh. But if even the softened tones of Huw Edwards on *BBC News* are unintelligible, you might need to pop a pair of Sennheiser's dialogue-boosting buds in your ears. Packing five 'speech clarity' modes, they come with a low-latency transmitter – or you can just connect via Bluetooth when you're watching on your tablet or phone. When you include the charging case the battery should last up to 37 hours, which is enough to get through nearly 117 episodes of *Pobol y Cwm*. Tidy.

£350 / sennheiser.com



? WTF IS ORBA 2?

Is it some sort of electronic citrus fruit?

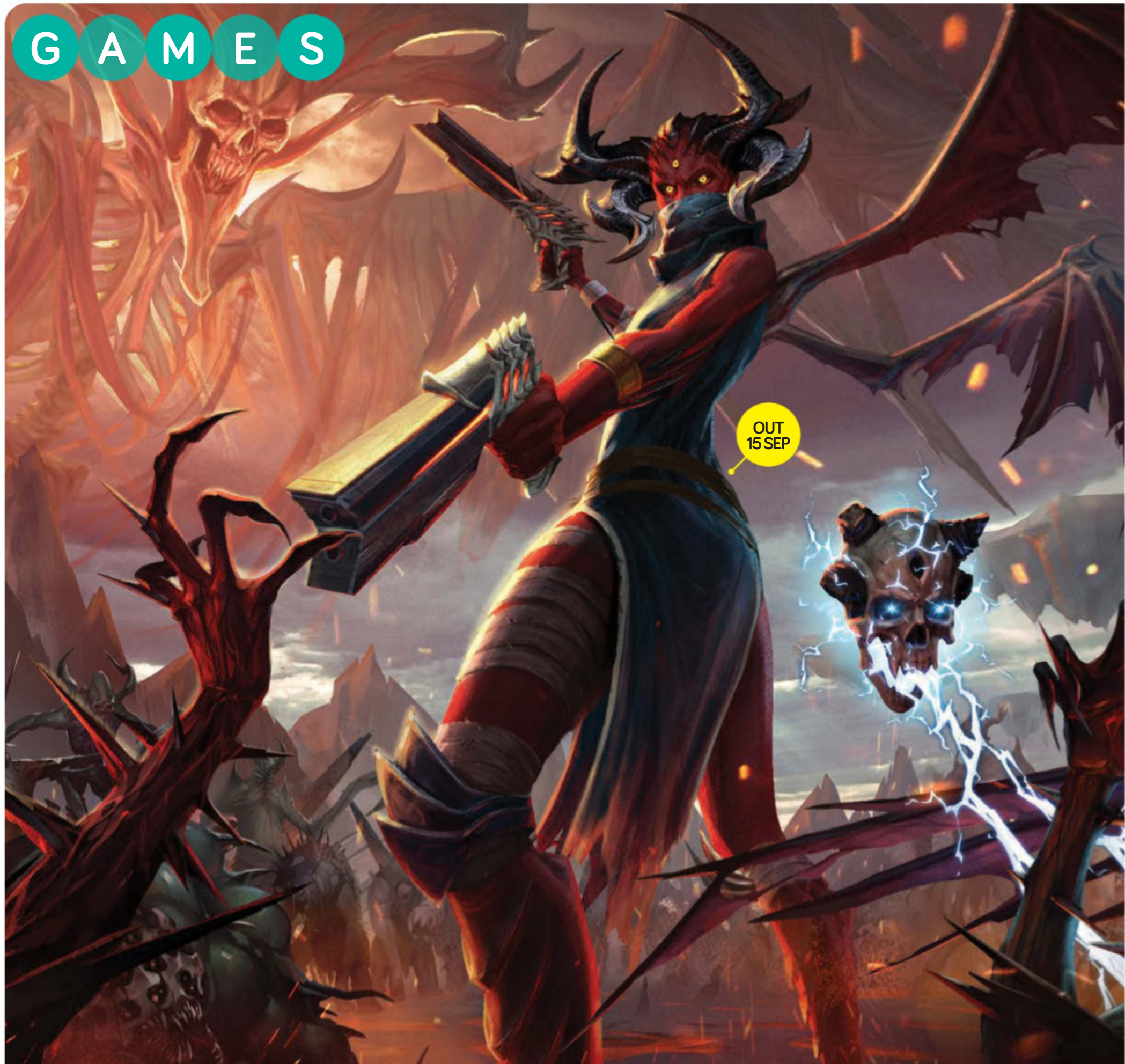
You're probably better off sticking to the real thing when it comes to breakfast time... but once your stomach is full and you're ready to go to work on some banging tunes, this union of half a grapefruit and a classic synth lets you craft sample-based hits without even leaving the table. The palm-friendly design of the Orba 2 (£150, artiphon.com) responds to a variety of gestures including taps, bumps, shakes and spins; these change how sound is played, making the whole music-making process feel more tactile – like plucking a guitar string or whacking a bongo.

Haven't I seen something like it before?

You might be thinking of the original Orba, which was released about three years ago, but this new version has some meaningful upgrades that give you more scope for song creation. As well as being able to turn literally any sound into a glorious melody or sting, quantising lets you align your input to the beat to make sure your efforts are never out of time – and the shift from eight-bar loops to 128-bar songs means compositions can bang on for up to five minutes rather than a handful of seconds.

Can I record with it?

Yep, there's a USB-C port and Bluetooth connectivity for plugging it into music apps such as GarageBand, Ableton Live, Logic Pro, Pro Tools, Cubase and FL Studio. If you want some privacy there's a 3.5mm headphone socket, but if you'd rather wow everyone around you with your latest creation you can bypass the internal 3W speaker and hook the Orba 2 up to a proper amp. Just make sure it's your own headlining slot: nobody likes a rando invading their stage and blasting beats from a half-grapefruit, no matter how nicely quantised they are.



FIRST PLAY METAL: HELLSINGER PC, PS5, XSX

There's more to a shooting game than just lining up the perfect headshot — there's also a sense of rhythm to how the action is choreographed in your movement, which feels especially true for the new *Doom* games.

Metal: Hellsinger runs with this idea in the foreground, as a first-person shooter that asks you to slay hordes of demons to the beat of pounding death metal. A metronome is visible on the edges of your crosshairs so you know when to pull the trigger to better pump your

shots. It helps that some of the weapons have their own unique rhythmic rate of fire.

On the surface, this is almost a clone of the latest iterations of *Doom* in terms of its demonic underworld visuals, as well as the glory-kill system where weakened and staggered enemies are left in a vulnerable glow that lets you go in for a quick finish; and while these animations aren't nearly as gory as ID's, they still see enemies dropping a load of health pick-ups. This becomes a crucial tactic for staying alive

as you get overwhelmed by increasingly aggressive waves of enemies.

The important reason to keep getting better here is not just to chase a better score: the better you slay to the beat, the more intense the music gets, to the point that the songs evolve and bring in vocals. The soundtrack has an impressive roster of guest vocalists too, including Serj Tankian, Matt Heafy and Randy Blythe. There's a demo available now for trigger-happy metalheads to get a taste before the game releases in September.



FIRST LOOK NO MAN'S SKYRIM



STARFIELD

XSX, PC

The final frontier in Bethesda's ambitious space RPG perhaps looks more familiar than you'd expect, with the divisive *No Man's Sky* being an apt comparison. Your early hours are spent on desolate planets and moons, scanning the environments, hunting the

local fauna, or getting into shootouts with space pirates. On the latter front, it at least seems the combat – playable in first or third-person – will feel intuitive, though there's nothing more to remind you of its RPG credentials than seeing damage numbers above enemies' heads.

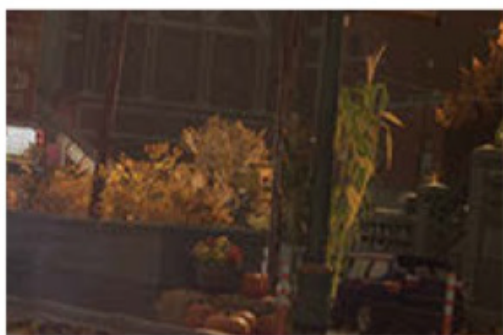
However, *Starfield* also sells the fantasy of space

exploration as you join Constellation, the last group of galactic pioneers. Not only will you be able to fully explore each planet, building your own outposts to help your odds of survival, but you'll even be able to build and fly your very own spaceship. There's just as much in the way of staggering customisation options for your own character, even

if they're mostly seen wearing a space helmet.

With the promise of being able to explore not just the surface of planets but whole star systems, and no doubt get in some dogfights along the way, the scope sounds overwhelming. No wonder we have to wait until 2023 at the earliest for *Starfield* to be finally released.

BEST OF THE XBOX & BETHESDA SUMMER SHOWCASE



REDFALL

XSX, PC

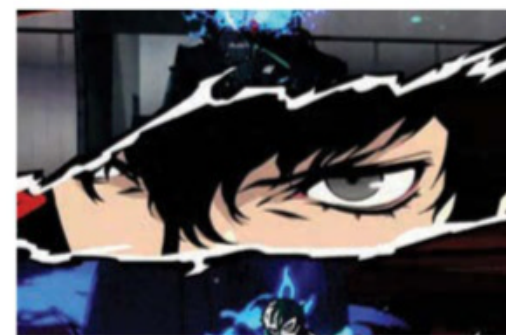
The colourful style of *Deathloop* was clearly no one-off, as Arkane's open-world vampire co-op shooter is filled with just as much character – four playable characters, in fact, including an engineer who fights with a robot buddy. You'll also be able to play solo when it launches in 2023.



DIABLO IV

XSX, XB1, PC, PS5, PS4

This dungeon-crawler may be keeping its overhead view, to better capture the scale of your heroes fighting relentless hordes of demons with friends either online or in local co-op; but even when zoomed out the graphics look tremendous, especially with the deep character customisation.



PERSONA 5 ROYAL

XSX, XB1, PC, PS5, PS4

Previously exclusive to PlayStation, the greatest Japanese RPG series finally comes to Xbox and PC, starting with the expanded Phantom Thieves ensemble edition on 21 October, followed by *Persona 4 Golden* and *Persona 3 Portable*. Just set aside a few hundred hours to play all three.



INCOMING

AUGUST

- SAINTS ROW
- TWO POINT CAMPUS
- SOUL HACKERS 2
- CULT OF THE LAMB

SEPTEMBER

- SPLATOON 3
- THE LAST OF US PART 1
- STEELRISING
- THE LORD OF THE RINGS: GOLLUM

More
games to
watch for
p37

Toyota GR Supra

GEARS OF PHWOAR



It's not too old-school to have an app: Toyota Supra Connect can be used to lock and unlock the car, and control the air-con.

from £49,495 / toyota.co.uk

NEWS DASHBOARD

Is that 'gears' as in 'manual'? Has Toyota listened to the people?

It certainly has. Earth is doomed anyway and lots of folks still want a proper petrol-powered sports car with a manual gearbox... which is why the Toyota GR Supra is now available with a six-speed intelligent manual transmission (iMT). That means you can currently get three of Toyota's sporty GR models as manuals, including the incredible little GR Yaris and hugely popular GR86 coupe on the right.

So just how good is it?

We thrashed the GR Supra around the Montebanico circuit in Spain and it felt like a brilliant mating of the 3L engine and six-speed box, via a new clutch design. There's plenty of power – and the braking and control systems have been tweaked too. Best of all, there's an extra-naughty Pro model available.

So, which one to buy?

The revised GR Supra range starts at £49,495, which is for the 2L automatic model. But if you want the best, head for that Pro, which tops out at £55,995. Interestingly, there's the option to lose a little bit of weight, like going for manually adjusted seats instead of electric, which shaves off some kilos if you're a real statty anorak.

Can you tell the manual apart from the automatic?

Crucially, the manual version of the Supra comes with a tell-tale red badge on the back end. That way you'll be able to instantly spot a purist driving one. And full marks to Toyota for offering the GR Supra in some super-sexy new colours, including a very current 'Moeraki grey'. We also got to drive a dazzling 'dawn blue' example, which looked pretty stunning. Oh, and look out for the quirky brown leather interior option.



CUDDLIER TOY

The Toyota GR86 coupe is another saucy slice of stripped-down sportiness. There's a rev-tastic 2.4L boxer engine, rear-wheel drive and oodles of rear-end antics as a result. It's fairly basic on the inside, but this car is all about the drive. It starts at £30k... but the UK allocation is sold out already.



BACK FOR MUD

Designed as the ultimate all-round electric mountain bike, the Canyon Spectral:On CF has a full carbon-fibre frame and comes with 720Wh or 900Wh battery options for a range of up to 100km. The lightest model weighs in at just under 23kg and prices start at £4749, with a range of zingy colours.



SEVEN WONDER

Offering even more thrills is Caterham's race-inspired but road-going Seven 420 CUP. With a 2L Duratec engine producing 210bhp, the lightweight chassis delivers a power-to-weight ratio of 375bhp per tonne and a 0-60 time of 3.6 seconds. Bilstein dampers keep you on the tarmac, and it's yours for £54,990.



Blast-off from the past LEGO GALAXY EXPLORER

Some people say they don't make Lego like they used to, but in the case of the Galaxy Explorer that's exactly what they've done. As one of two new sets released to celebrate Lego's 90th birthday – the other being the 4514-piece Lion Knights' Castle (£345) – its existence is the result of a fans' vote to choose some old favourites for recreation. And this is a rare modern example of democracy delivering a decent result: with 1254 pieces, the Galaxy Explorer isn't the most challenging build, but its classic colour scheme and larger scale than the 1979 original should make it a hit with nostalgic Lego fans across the universe.

£90 / [lego.com](https://www.lego.com)



Big game frontier LG ULTRAGEAR 48GQ900

If your PS5's plugged into a window-sized telly in the living room, isn't it only fair you give your gaming PC the same kind of treatment? LG's 48in GQ900 might not be quite as big as its best OLEDs, but its UltraHD resolution, 0.1ms response time and 120Hz refresh rate certainly match them for gaming prowess – plus it's also compatible with Nvidia's G-Sync and AMD's FreeSync tech to help reduce any pesky screen tearing. You also get a pair of 20W speakers built in, along with three HDMI ports, one DisplayPort, one upstream USB 3.0 for connecting to your PC, two downstream USB 3.0 for devices, and a mic-supporting headphone socket. Your TV might even end up getting a bit jealous.

[Etba](https://www.etba.com) / [lg.com](https://www.lg.com)



NEWS FEED

MICROSOFT FINALLY STOPS EXPLORING

Internet Explorer is officially dead. Microsoft confirmed the browser was 'retired' on 15 June, after 27 years of service. Yes, we thought it was already dead too, but it's only fitting we gave it an obituary here. Its replacement, Edge, lives on but is only used by people who don't know any better.

POWERS OF BOWERS GET A SEQUEL

Bowers & Wilkins' excellent over-ear cans have been upgraded. The PX7 S2 (£379) come in three colours – grey, blue and black – with newly developed 40mm drive units, six mics for better ANC, and sonic fine-tuning via B&W's Music app. We'll have a full review in next month's issue.

EUROPE IS UNSTRUCK BY LIGHTNING

Bad news for iPhones: by autumn 2024 all gadgets sold in the EU must use USB-C to charge. That's good news for consumers and the environment, but not for Apple's Lightning connector. The ruling won't apply to Brexitland, but it now seems inevitable all iPhones will move to USB-C.

APPLE WATCH IS FOOTLOOSE AND FANCY THREE

It's been almost five years since Apple introduced a cellular version of the Watch – and it's finally available on Three, having been limited to EE, Vodafone and O2 in the UK. It works via eSIM, uses the same number as your iPhone and can be added to an existing plan for just £7 a month.

STUFF MEETS

Henrik Fisker

THE MASTERMIND BEHIND AUTO STARTUP FISKER ON ROTATING SCREENS AND DIGITAL DRIVING



In-car technology should be more advanced.

When I grew up, a phone had a cable and a dial; but now your phone is a mini computer. You go out in your car and it doesn't feel quite as modern as your phone. That's a problem because the car is expensive; it's supposed to have the most advanced technology... but for the last 50 years the car industry has been very insulated. It took four and a half years to make a car. And that means, about between year three and four, you're selecting the technology. When you buy a new car today, the technology was chosen years ago. We set out to make a development plan of two and a half years, so it's just as fast as a phone.

We selected the technology for our new Ocean last year.

That's why you will get the highest-resolution screen of any car in the world. We did it in 18 months, together with Foxconn – went over a mountain to get it done. We already have a prototype and it's a 17.1in screen. We're also going to be the first to have a digital radar system. And the solar roof... we had to invent a converter to get the solar energy into the high-voltage battery, because nobody else has done that so far. And that's why the car is going to feel so hi-tech and new.

When you're using a phone and you watch a movie, you want it in landscape.

If you think about a big screen in a car, you have a certain reach so portrait is much better for driving. But then

when you stop and you're charging you can click on a button and play a game, watch a movie, whatever you want. So that's how the idea of a rotating screen came up. We've been developing our own user interface internally and we'll announce more at the end of the year. It's exciting and unique stuff.

I think we're going to be able to stay competitive with our battery pack for a long time.

We did a lot of investigation into new, better technology. We are at a point where the large battery makers have spent so many billions on lithium-ion technology, and there are several big factories set up in Europe and the US for lithium-ion, that I don't think you're going to have any new breakthrough battery tech this side of 2030. Nobody's going to invest

in it. It'll take too long. So in the meantime, things will improve a little bit. The question is, can you change the tech or can you improve the battery pack with an over-the-air update? We have the latest, very dense battery pack with a full management system.

We want to create a seamless experience for drivers.

When we started thinking about this vehicle, my idea was for Fisker to be a digital car company where you don't have to go to a dealer. We should have a seamless journey, an all-digital user experience where you don't even have to bring the car

to service – we pick it up. You make an appointment on your app. Obviously it'll be capable of receiving over-the-air updates, but there are some things you must build in hardware to make certain updates available.

You have to think differently from a normal car company.

They have a base price, a middle price and a high price. So in the base-level car they take many options out, and if you want you can either add some options when you buy it or you can choose the next version up. But we want to be thinking differently: let's make the base car with enough hardware that, even if you want to add something later, we can enable that.

Fisker will start Ocean production in November at a carbon-neutral factory in Austria. Right-hand-drive versions will be available in the UK by mid-2023, starting at £34,990.

“WE SHOULD HAVE AN ALL-DIGITAL EXPERIENCE WHERE YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO BRING THE CAR TO SERVICE”



PRIZE
VALUE
3x £340



WIN 1 OF 3 PETOI BITTLE ROBOTS & BATTERY PACKS!

Do you dream of learning to code with the world's first palm-sized robot dog? Well, if you win our competition in association with Petoï, you'll dream no longer – for you (and two others) will have won your own Bittle companion, plus a very welcome extra battery pack.

You can buy Bittle either in pre-assembled form (where's the fun in that?) or as a kit to assemble. The kit doesn't have screws – you just interlock all the components, including nine servos. Then when it's finished and switched on, you can program it to move freely around your home using Petoï's app.

The device uses a customised Arduino board coordinating all movements, while you can also clip various smart sensors onto Bittle to do even more with it. Sounds like fun, eh? Enter this month's competition by following the simple instructions on the right – and head to **petoi.com** to find out more.

HOW TO ENTER

Own your own pet without owning an actual pet by going to **stuff.tv/win** and answering the following question:

WHAT DOES 'STEM' STAND FOR?

- A...** Sausage, Tomato, Egg, Mushrooms
- B...** Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
- C...** Storage, Thunderbolt, Ethernet, Motherboard

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COMPETITION
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2022**

Terms & conditions: **1** Open to UK residents aged 18 or over. **2** Entries close 11.59pm, 11 Aug 2022. **3** Prizes are as stated. **4** Prizes are non-transferable. **5** Only one entry per person.
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MEGA LAPTOP BUYING GUIDE Stuff 25 YEARS

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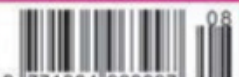


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Asus ROG Phone 6 rated
Sony's latest LinkBuds S earphones
Mario Strikers & Sonic Origins reviewed



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* Based on internal test by GP of the average percentage of battery capacity charged after a 10-minute charge as of May 2021. Calculated from 5 simultaneous charges of 4pcs of new Charge 10 1700mAh AA batteries to 90%+ of capacity at 20°C, followed by battery discharge according to IEC 61951-2.

Donut fear the reaper

First came Sony's revolutionary LinkBuds: in-ears with a hole in the middle. Now we get the even more revolutionary LinkBuds S: in-ears *without* a hole in the middle!



It's only been a few months since Sony launched the rather unique LinkBuds, earphones designed to let the world in rather than keep it out. They're perfect for dealing with annoying co-workers while still being able to blast your eardrums with Lizzo, and we were impressed enough

with them to break out the full five-star *Stuff* rating.

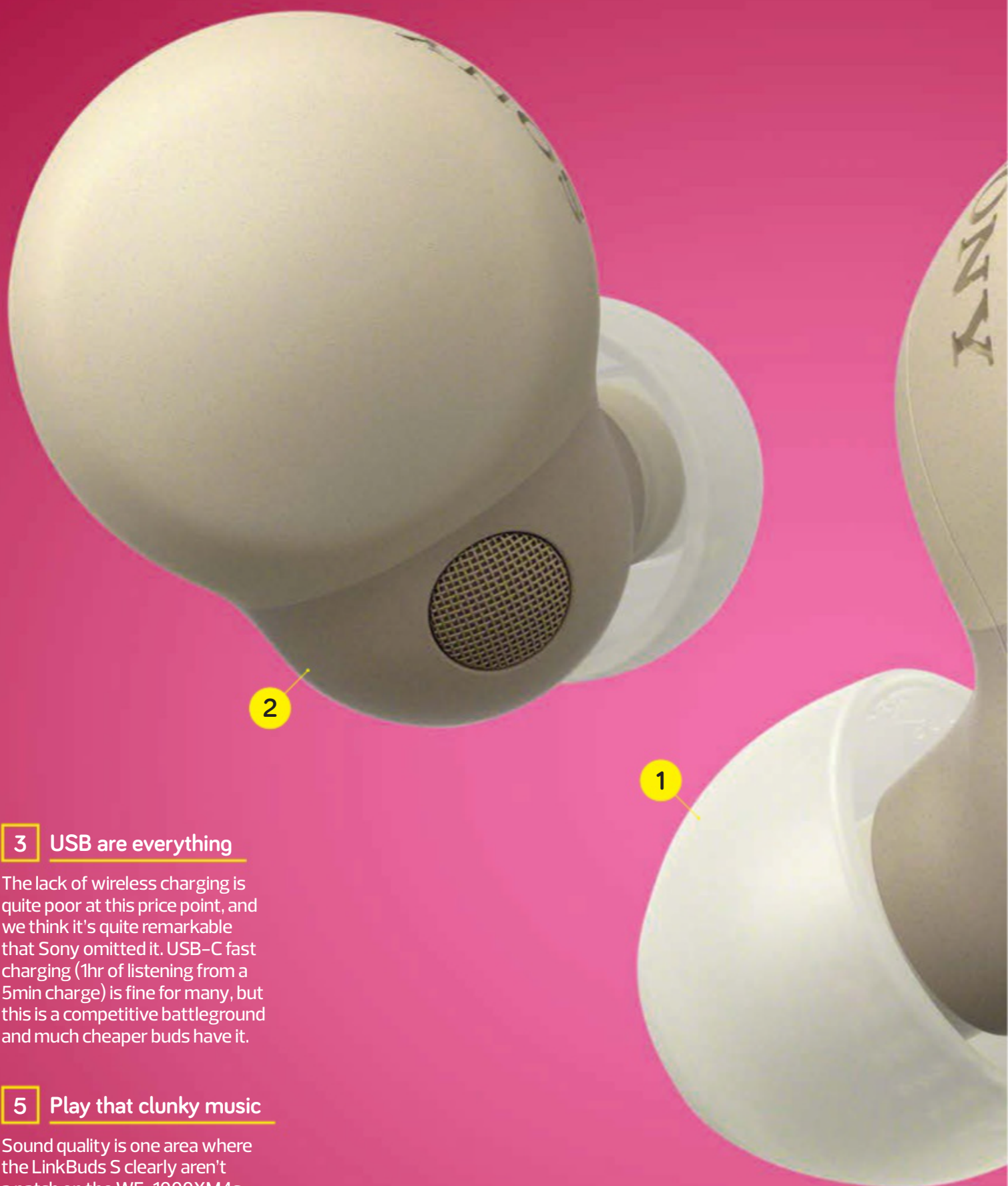
And now we get a £30 more expensive version, called the LinkBuds S. You might well expect from the 'S' that these are a slightly changed version of the original design, but in fact they're completely different, and look far more like conventional earbuds. You'd never guess that

the two sets of LinkBuds are supposed to be close siblings. Even the charging case has a totally new look.

As with the originals, all-day comfort is still the name of the game, although context-aware active noise-cancellation is added here in addition to an excellent automatic ambient mode to make sure you can

hear what's going on in the world around you.

The elephant in the room is Sony's WF-1000XM4 in-ears, which you can often pick up for less than £200 now... and which offer superior audio quality and ANC. Are the LinkBuds S still a better option for some, though? That depends on whether your priority is sound or comfort...



1 Filly love songs

While the original LinkBuds have an unusual 'ring' design, these are much more conventional buds. And while the originals don't have eartips, these do (four sizes are included). They stay put quite well, though they're not as easy to seat in the ear as Apple's AirPods Pro.

2 Hung parts run free

At just 4.8g per bud, they're lighter and smaller than most wireless in-ears – including Sony's flagship WF-1000XM4s (which weigh over 7g each). You'll still experience some fatigue when wearing the LinkBuds S for several hours, though.

3 USB are everything

The lack of wireless charging is quite poor at this price point, and we think it's quite remarkable that Sony omitted it. USB-C fast charging (1hr of listening from a 5min charge) is fine for many, but this is a competitive battleground and much cheaper buds have it.

4 I love to shove

There are tap controls on the buds that are easy to master. By default the left bud enables you to go between ANC and ambient modes, while the right is for playback controls, but you can edit these in the app. There's also support for Spotify Tap.

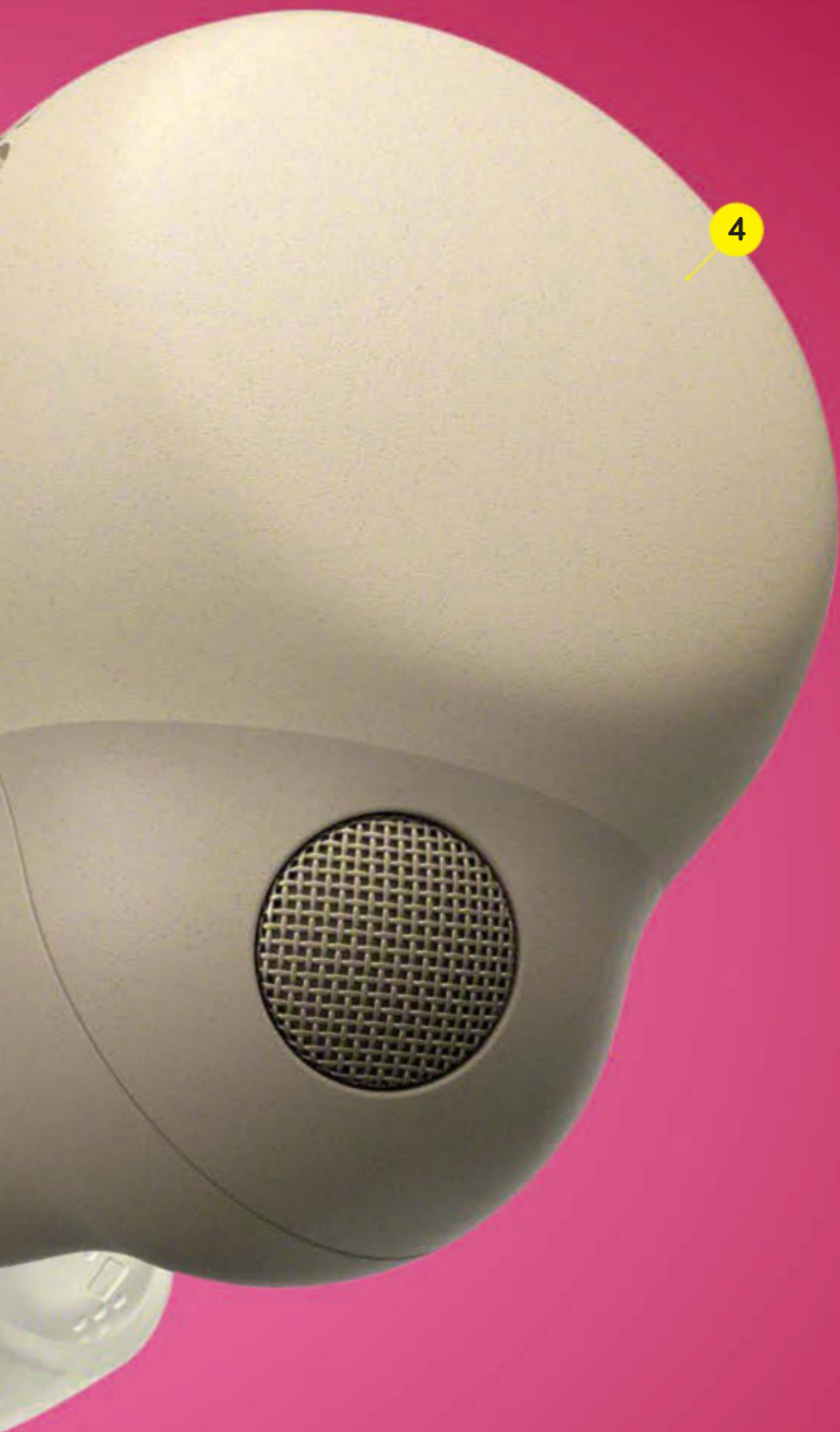
5 Play that clunky music

Sound quality is one area where the LinkBuds S clearly aren't a patch on the WF-1000XM4s. The drivers are smaller and you do feel like something's missing in the treble content compared to, say, the AirPods Pro or Sony's own pricier buds.

24 hours with the Sony LinkBuds S

● Good
● Meh
● Evil





Techspecs

Drivers 5mm

Supported formats SBC, AAC, LDAC

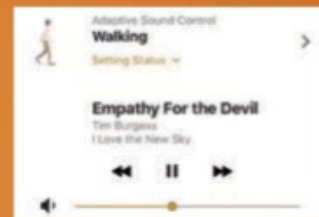
Water-resistance IPX4

Battery life 6hrs (buds), 14hrs (case)

Weight 2x 4.8g (buds), 35g (case)

Dancing screen

Sony's Headphones Connect app works alongside the LinkBuds S and has a stack of settings to master

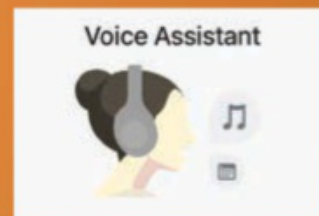


Adaptive sound

The app will detect your activity and adapt the level of ambient noise to suit. You can adjust the level of ANC that will be applied in different scenarios and even auto-switch depending on location.

Speak-to-Chat

This means you can set the buds to auto-pause your music if they detect someone talking to you. It works OK, sometimes... but you'll find yourself taking them out anyway so you don't seem rude.



Voice assistants

You can use the buds with Alexa built-in or Google Assistant, though the latter is not available on iOS. Setup happens within the Sony app and is easy to do. They also support Fast Pair on Android.

Other stuff

As well as support for Spotify Tap (enabled in the Sony app), you can set up the LinkBuds S for use with Sony's 360 Reality Audio format, for more immersive listening with compatible tracks.

They're easy to wear for several hours at a time...
...and fine for running in the rain (they're rated IPX4)...
...but look elsewhere if you want a secure fit for robust exercise.
The movement detection for ambient noise control works really well.
For practicality, if not sheer sound quality, these are a great buy.



The soundstage could be wider and the ANC better, but that's for the WF-1000XM4s – these are great all-rounder buds where comfort is the name of the game. They're pleasant to use for many hours at a time and we didn't find ourselves turning back to our AirPods Pro too quickly. Wireless charging does feel like a miss, though. @dangrabham

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Not the best for music quality or noise-cancelling, but top notch for comfort and calls

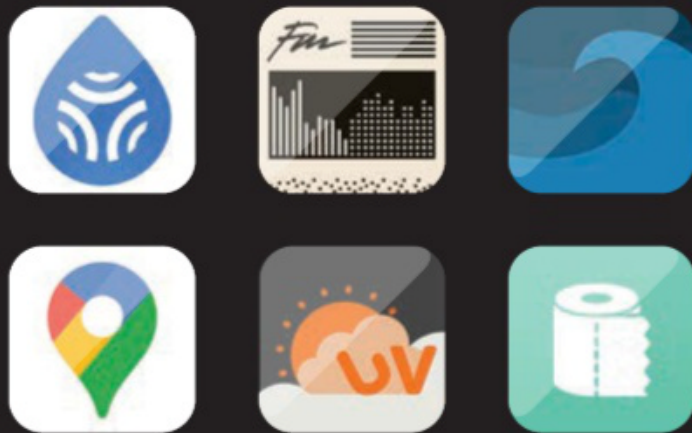
10hrs 19hrs 20hrs 23hrs 24hrs



PACE 2

BLUE STEEL

Mini meme



BEACH DON'T KILL MY VIBE

They say sand and smartphones
shouldn't mix – and they might well
have a point – but these apps can make
a day at the seaside go without a hitch



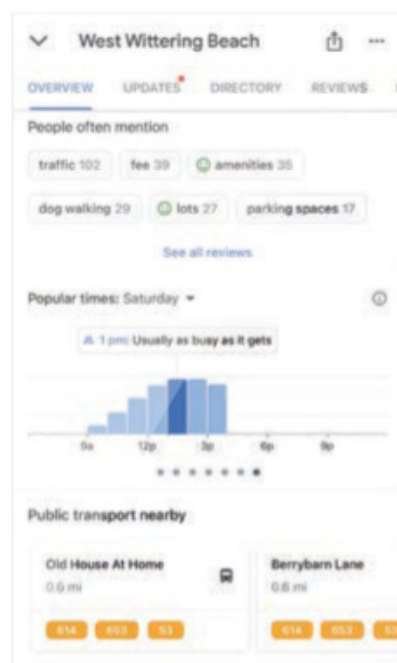
● Tomorrow.io

When you fancy heading to the beach, this weather app does the usual things: providing hourly forecasts and rain warnings to help you avoid a soaking. It also lets you choose activities and then outlines when's best to do them. Alas, sunbathing isn't an option for some reason, but you can infer solid beach time from when the app suggests you might partake in a spot of barbecuing.
£free (IAP) / Android, iOS



● Tides Near Me

If you think the beach is all about being active and hurling yourself into the sea while balancing on a plank – or you just don't fancy getting cut off from dry land by walking out too far on a picturesque sand bank – this app is a must. You get tide times for nearby locations and can explore the entire world on a scrollable map, marking any places you intend to visit as favourites.
£free / Android, iOS



● Google Maps

Google Maps isn't solely about making sure you don't get lost when attempting to travel somewhere. It includes photos and Street View images to gawp at, helping you confirm a beach isn't 90% jagged rocks. You can peruse predictive and live graphs relating to how busy a place gets, and you can browse local amenities to try when you've had enough of lying in a heap slowly turning crimson.
£free / Android, iOS



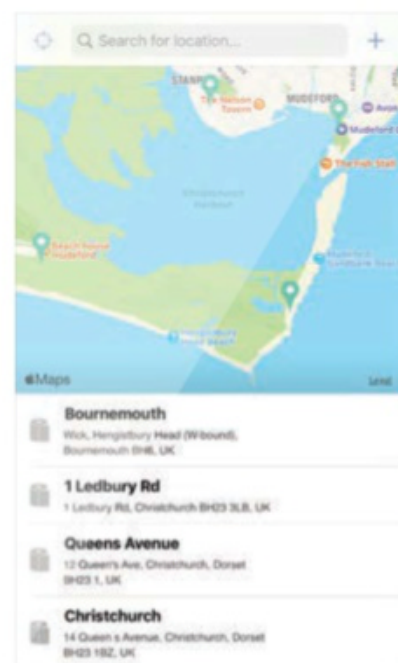
● Poolsuite FM

This music player is a mix of retro cool and summer vibes, to put you in the mood for sunny beach larks – ironic, given that it was made in Scotland. The app interface has been beamed across from an old Mac Plus and plays video loops of beautiful people having fun in the sun. Music-wise, you get several channels of head-bobbing tunes, thus avoiding arguments about what to fire up on Spotify.
£free / Android, iOS



● UVLens

UV readings tend to be buried in weather apps, or not there at all – which isn't great if you start to burn the second you step into the sunshine. UVLens leaves no doubt as to how likely you are to suffer, with a reading you can see from across the street. It can make things personal too, with a burn risk based on your skin type. There are even alerts for when you need to reapply sunscreen (or flee to the shade).
£free / Android, iOS



● Flush

Caught short on the beach? You could wade out into the sea and have a pee, but if you're in the UK you'll end up soaking wet and freezing cold... and get a 'look' from anyone who figures out what you're doing. If there's not a pub or fast-food joint nearby, use Flush. It instantly serves up a list of local public toilets, and with a tap it'll get you straight to one by way of your favourite map app.
£free / Android, iOS

SUSTAINABLE SUNNIES



The plastic-free pretties
Bird Suma

Keep misplacing your shades? This standout pair should be hard to forget. A striking take on a classic shape, they pair a marbled finish with sustainable sandalwood temples. And if you do lose your Sumas, at least their plastic-free frames can biodegrade within three years.

£99 / findyourbirds.com



The fishy frames
Waterhaul Pentire

Dangle a rod in the sea for long enough and you might reel in some jettisoned specs. Or, try these lightweight frames crafted entirely from recycled fishing nets. Saltwater-resistant and shipped in a cork case, each pair sold also supports marine cleaning workshops.

£75 / waterhaul.co



The woody wayfarers
Bear Essentials Maverick

Most bears don't wear sunglasses, but even Pooh needs protection when he strays from the forest. These Bear Essentials are hewn from sustainably sourced zebrano and walnut, and each frame features a unique natural pattern. Plus every pair sold plants a tree.

£80 / bear-essentials.com

SPORTY SPECS



The running wraps
SunGod Ultras

Squinting while sprinting is a shortcut to a stumble... thus these streamlined jogging goggles. They sit light at 26g, yet four nose pad options guarantee a bounce-free fit. Recycled plastic arms reduce the environmental impact, while 8KO nylon lenses limit the risk of running into a bin.

£130 / sungod.co

UPVOTED
SUNGLASSES

Keen for a squint-free summer, Chris Rowlands goes full Top Gun to find a fleet of shady frames to fit every face (sunshine sold separately)



The pedalling peepers
Rapha Explore

Trendy eyewear alone won't improve your trial times, but these stylish cycling specs do more than look the part. Their classy chassis is capped by a one-piece panel that enhances contrast and adapts to changing light – ideal for spotting obstacles on long rides over varied terrain.

from £130 / rapha.cc

SMART SHADES



The social snappers
Ray-Ban Stories

One day we'll take photos simply by blinking. For now, Ray-Ban's clever specs capture first-person pics and video using twin 5MP cameras. One tap is all it takes, with an LED alerting onlookers to your antics. You can't livestream, but you can sync stills and vids straight to the Facebook View app.

£299 / ray-ban.com



The tuneful temples
Bose Frames Soprano

Bose's sonic sunnies reduce the load on your ears by combining sun protection with music: polarised lenses take care of your peepers, while speakers in the arms supply the soundtrack. OpenAudio smarts allow the outside world in without sacrificing that fabled Bose quality.

£240 / bose.co.uk



The swappable speakers
Anker Soundcore Frames

Bit of a fashionista? Want shades you can switch in an instant? These smart glasses come in 10 modular styles, so you can go from wayfarer to aviator as the fancy takes you. Simply swap the front and keep the arms, which harbour flexible hinges, touch controls and a quartet of speakers.

£150 / uk.soundcore.com

HOW TO DECIDE

1 Open eyes

Some shades ship in different sizes, while others can be tweaked to fit your temples. If you have a Harry Maguire bonce, check that the measurements can accommodate it.



2 Golden eyes

Clarity isn't the only consideration when it comes to lenses. Polarisation reduces glare, while tints change the way you see the world. Some sunnies let you switch coloured inserts.

▼ The revamped rings

Oakley Re:SubZero

Old-school shades are everywhere, but these multi-sport specs are more than a retro revival. Fronted by a single sculpted shield, the Re:SubZero are etched to echo the twin-lens originals of the '90s. Distinctive by design and equipped with colour-boosting Prizm optics, they come in four gleaming schemes – though only the black variant will give you those vintage Vin Diesel vibes.

£201 / oakley.com



3 For your eyes only

Beyond the practicalities of fitting, you'll want to pick a style that suits your kisser. Nothing beats trying frames for real, but many brands now offer virtual fittings – or free returns.



4 Compromise?

Active glasses are usually lightweight, hitting the scales at around 25g. Some classic styles sit heavier on the bridge of your sniffer, while smart specs can weigh 50g or more.



HUAWEI WATCH GT 3

GO FURTHER WITH SIR MO FARAH



BUY IT NOW AT [CONSUMER.HUAWEI.COM/UK](https://consumer.huawei.com/uk)

Powered by
HarmonyOS

KIT PLAYING GAMES WITH OUR HEARTS

We may not have any top-notch new consoles on the way this year, but gear for games isn't just about the really expensive stuff that people skimp on for family birthday presents for. Here's our guide to the best accessories for whatever you play, garnished with a comprehensive smattering of the very best upcoming titles on all the major platforms. Whether you play on PC, PlayStation, Xbox or Nintendo, there's something here for you...

[Words Alan Wen, Craig Grannell]



PLAYSTATION ACCESSORIES

If you're lucky enough to have been able to snag a PS5, you're a special person indeed (or you live near Argos). Here are our top add-ons.

p38



XBOX ACCESSORIES

If you've got a new Series X or S (or a One X or One S), you'll find something to love here – including a selection of pads and all-important extra storage.

p40



SWITCH ACCESSORIES

Whichever variant you own, here's our favourite Switchy kit, including a brand spanking new *Monster Hunter Rise* edition of the Pro Controller.

p42



CONSOLE GAMES

New titles to look forward to this year and beyond. Just like the movies, sequels dominate... but there are some real crackers on the way.

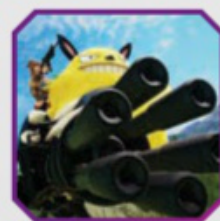
p44



PC ACCESSORIES

Choice among computer bits and bobs is never a problem – there's stacks of the stuff to pick from. Here's our guide to the latest and greatest.

p46



PC GAMES

Sims! Strategy! Grown-up Pokemon! It's all here and it's all coming to your machine down the pipe of dreams... even a game about Gollum.

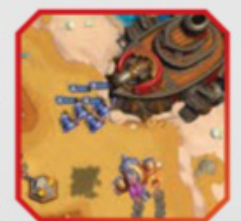
p48



MOBILE ACCESSORIES

If you really must augment your perfect little smartphone with add-ons, here's the way to do it – including our review of the new Razer Kishi 2.

p50



MOBILE GAMES

It's hard to beat the portable telephone for many things, and gaming innovation is one of 'em. This batch includes new *CoD* and *Final Fantasy* entries.

p52

'STATION MASTERS

Finally got your hands on a PS5? Beyond its gamechanging features, these accessories can take your skills even further...

OR, FOR A BIT OF COLOUR...



DUALSENSE

In case you object to the futuristic white of the original DualSense, a whole range of other colours have been introduced. So you can go back to black or, if you don't mind splashing out a fiver more, how about pink or purple? from £60 / playstation.com



CONSOLE COVER

Give that big white whale of a PS5 a makeover with console plates sporting colours that can match your new DualSense. Maybe buy one the same time you upgrade your storage, as those plates are tricky to take off. £45 / playstation.com

SCUF REFLEX PRO

It may have sounded like a bundle of gimmicks, but the DualSense really has proved a quiet gamechanger for the moment-to-moment PlayStation experience. Its dynamic haptics and adaptive triggers immerse you in the experience just as much as what you see and hear.

Yet you can't help but wonder whether Sony could have done even more – such as launching its own version of a premium elite controller similar to Xbox's. After all, it did introduce an attachment for the PS4's DualShock 4 giving you two back buttons to bring a real competitive edge – a great example being the ability to jump in a first-person shooter without

taking your thumb off the right stick for aiming.

Well, here comes premium gamepad maker Scuf Gaming, whose Reflex Pro has everything you expect from the DualSense but with the addition of greater comfort for long and intensive gaming sessions, including textured grips and thumbsticks. More importantly, it comes with four conveniently located rear plastic paddles, which can be programmed with any other inputs so you never have to take your thumbs off the sticks.

You also get the ability to set three different profiles – meaning you can swap inputs on the fly whether you've got your controller programmed for

an FPS, a racer, a fighting game or anything else.

This is a significantly pricey piece of kit given what it is, while other options (albeit not made for PS5) do offer higher levels of control customisation, such as full button remapping or the ability to adjust stick and trigger sensitivity. But you do get a choice between convex or concave thumbsticks to change... and yes, you can also use it with a gaming PC.

Price £220 / stuff.tv/ScufRP

Key specs

- Bluetooth, USB-C, 3.5mm stereo headset port
- 10-15hr battery life ● 300g

STUFF SAYS Really will raise your game, if you can stomach that price ★★★★★☆



PULSE 3D WIRELESS HEADSET

£90 / playstation.com

This official mid-range option, tuned for the PS5's 3D audio powers, is a comfortable fit with a sleek design complementing the console, and even has a noise-cancelling mic hidden inside the cups. The 12hr battery life may not match pricier competitors, but it also has a headphone port and cable.

Stuff says ★★★★★



WD BLACK SN850 NVME SSD 1TB WITH HEATSINK

£161 / westerndigital.com

Upgrading your PS5's storage is essential unless you want to uninstall games all the time, but not just any SSD will do. This one meets the console's requirements perfectly and the 1TB option provides plenty of storage; just be aware you'll need to open up your PS5 to install it.

Stuff says ★★★★★



HD CAMERA FOR PS5

£50 / playstation.com

A significant upgrade over the PS4's camera, this dual-lens job captures in 1080p and comes with its own stand, whether you want it atop your TV or below it. Better yet is a background removal tool so you can hide your bedroom clutter. Highly recommended for anyone who's getting serious about streaming.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆



DUALSENSE CHARGING STATION

£25 / playstation.com

DualSense controllers are easy to charge with any USB-C cable, and those new features do eat up battery life. But if you decide to invest in another controller, then it's definitely worth getting a charging station where you can simply dock two of them when you've finished your sesh for the day.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

**Pad decisions**

You can also opt to build your own custom Reflex without the Pro texture grips, and can replace the adaptive triggers with FPS-friendly instant triggers.

Loose box

The bottom half of the front of the controller can be detached for swapping out the thumbsticks – but don't worry, it all clicks snugly back into place.

Guard to explain

This thing doesn't come with a case. That'll cost you an extra £40, in a pack that also gets you a gamer grip, a USB-C cable and four spare thumbsticks.

Gripper to shreds

The triggers have a textured surface instead of the smooth finish of the previous Elite control pad, so you shouldn't slip during a sweaty showdown.

One sway or another

The circular d-pad is perfect for smoother control in fighting games, but for singular inputs you can always replace it with a digital d-pad.

Hanging on the smelly One

Even though it's a new model, the Elite 2 will also work with your old Xbox One, and of course it can also connect to PCs and mobile devices.

BOX TICKERS

Whether it's boosting your results or tailoring to your comfort, these additions will improve your Xbox gaming Xponentially

XBOX ELITE WIRELESS SERIES 2

If you were an Xbox owner in the previous generation, the great news is that your controllers can still work on the Series X/S consoles without a fuss.

Still, new models do well to iterate on already terrific designs... and that's certainly the case with the Series 2 model of Xbox's official gamepad.

The original Elite, released back in 2015 for Xbox One, already set a high standard for premium customisable controllers, but the Elite 2 builds on that with even more customisation for pro gamers – while retaining the excellent circular d-pad and the pristine metal back paddles for mapping inputs to save from

taking your thumbs off the sticks. Those sticks can be swapped out, by the way.

The most notable change comes in the controller's handles, which now have a textured grip made from rubber so it's even more comfortable in the hands. But there's more to it than that, as you can now also customise the thumbstick's tension, which helps provide more precise aiming in first-person shooters. You also have greater customisation over the hair trigger locks, letting you adjust them so a gun will fire even faster. Further customisation is available with the Xbox Accessories app, including even more tailored button

mapping with three custom profiles to swap on the fly.

A reason for casual gamers to splurge on this controller is that it comes with an internal battery, so you can finally ditch those AAs. That might be a bit too pricey a perk considering it's already common elsewhere, but to sweeten the deal there's also a fancy carry-case to keep your Elite and its components in tip-top condition. Gotta make that investment last, right?

Price £160 / stuff.tv/EliteS2

Key specs

- Bluetooth, USB-C,
- 3.5mm stereo headset port
- 40hr battery life ● 345g

STUFF SAYS The best customisable premium controller for any console ★★★★★



XBOX ADAPTIVE CONTROLLER

£75 / microsoft.com

Accessibility in games has been an important topic in recent years, and Microsoft has done much to lead that conversation. With two large dome-sized buttons on the surface and a whopping 19 3.5mm ports that allow connection for any assistive input, this is an essential purchase for any gamer who can't use a regular controller.

Stuff says ★★★★★



TURTLE BEACH STEALTH 700 GEN 2 MAX

£180 / turtlebeach.com

This latest iteration of Turtle Beach's excellent headset doesn't appear different. It still has comfy memory-foam ear cushions, 40hr battery life and the company's signature Superhuman Hearing mode. But although it is designed for Xboxes, a flip of a switch makes it fully compatible with any other console.

Stuff says ★★★★★



SEAGATE STORAGE EXPANSION CARD (1TB)

£220 / microsoft.com

These proprietary expansion cards may not come cheap, but they sure are convenient: rather than requiring any knowhow, they simply plug into the back of your Xbox Series X/S just like old memory cards. You can even transfer your games and saves between consoles.

Stuff says ★★★★★



XBOX DESIGN LAB CONTROLLER

from £70 / xboxdesignlab.com

The standard Xbox controllers have various colour options, but if you don't mind spending a few pennies you can choose from 19 palettes to design fully custom combinations – from the triggers to individual buttons. Splash out more for extras such as metallic finishes, rubberised grips or a personalised engraving.

Stuff says ★★★★★

OPTIONAL XTRAS



RECHARGEABLE BATTERY

We don't get why Microsoft still hasn't done away with using AA batteries, but the next best thing is this rechargeable cell that fits in the same slot, giving 30hrs of battery life. It's recharged with the included USB-C cable.

£20 / xbox.com



POWERA MOGA MOBILE GAMING CLIP 2

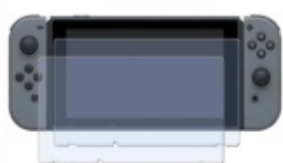
With cloud gaming taking off on Xbox Game Pass, you can now stream games on the go from your phone. But nothing beats a proper controller, so this grip easily attaches your phone on top.

£15 / microsoft.com

SWITCH HITTERS

Whether you've had one since launch or just bagged an OLED, these extras will switch things up for Nintendo's hybrid console

NOW KEEP IT SAFE



AMFILM PROTECTOR

Tempered glass screen protectors are essential in case you drop your Switch while out and about. The OLED model already has one fitted, but better safe than sorry. Just note the two Switches are different sizes. £7 / amazon.co.uk



CARRYING CASE

You could just sling your Switch into any old bag, but a proper case is much better. They come in many designs, including *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* [pictured], with room for storing a few game cards as well as a stand. from £15 / store.nintendo.co.uk

SWITCH PRO CONTROLLER

For all the innovative tech of the Switch's in-built Joy-Cons, not to mention the ability to carry your gaming on the go or turn the pair into two single gamepads, they are far from ideal. There's no dedicated d-pad, they feel a bit too small, and those sticks are way too prone to drifting issues. So unless you only use your Switch as a handheld, a Pro Controller is really a must-have.

With sticks, buttons, bumpers and triggers of a more substantial size than those of the Joy-Cons, this wireless option shares a similar design to the Classic Pro Controllers that Nintendo released for its Wii and Wii U consoles (although the right

analogue stick's layout has more of an Xbox look). Nonetheless, the texturised grips make this controller immediately more comfortable in the hands.

It may feel no-nonsense, but it still has many of the Joy-Con's features under the hood, including the under-utilised HD rumble haptics and a gyroscope that makes aiming in *Splatoon 2* so much more intuitive – and it's great that more developers have been including gyro-aiming in their games. You can rely on the Pro Controller to accompany your lengthy gaming sessions of *Xenoblade Chronicles* or *Monster Hunter Rise*.

Speaking of which, the special edition pictured opposite (£65)

coincides with the release of *Monster Hunter Rise's* *Sunbreak* expansion. It features a silver design of flagship monster Malzeno and looks the absolute business, while still having the usual semi-transparent casing. It may be quite subtle, but it's just one of a few official special-edition versions that have been released over the years to provide a subtle splash of personality over the standard Pro Controller's otherwise boring black.

Price from £60 / stuff.tv/SPC

Key specs

- Bluetooth, USB-C
- 40hr battery life ● 246g

STUFF SAYS The essential accessory for every serious Switch owner ★★★★★



SANDISK MICROSDXC MEMORY CARD

from £20 / store.nintendo.co.uk
Unless you're only buying physical games, the Switch's internal storage (32/64GB) won't last you very long, so investing in additional memory is essential. You can't go wrong with SanDisk's microSDs, and we recommend at least 128GB; these Nintendo-licensed cards do cost more, though. **Stuff says** ★★★★★



RING FIT ADVENTURE

£70 / store.nintendo.co.uk
You can't buy the official Ring-Con separately, but then why would you? It's an essential accessory for *Ring Fit Adventure*, Nintendo's excellent fitness game in a turn-based RPG format, which (with the Joy-Con) helps you work out in a whole range of cardio and stretching exercises. **Stuff says** ★★★★★



HORI SPLIT PAD PRO

£45 / argos.co.uk
If long handheld sessions are starting to cramp your hands, this is just what the doctor ordered. It may result in a bulkier console – while missing key Joy-Con features such as HD rumble and gyro – but having a full-size controller (with a dedicated d-pad and programmable rear buttons) might just be worth that sacrifice. **Stuff says** ★★★★★☆



MCLASSIC

£100 / amazon.co.uk
While it may be years until we see a proper Switch successor, this dongle is a pricey upgrade that subtly improves the console's visuals on the big screen, smoothing out the image quality and upscaling it to 1440p (as long as your display supports that resolution). A separate toggle can also bring benefits for owners of retro consoles. **Stuff says** ★★★★★☆

**Bros-town traffic**

There have also been Pro Controllers for *Splatoon 2*, *Xenoblade Chronicles* and *Super Smash Bros Ultimate*. All fetch higher prices from resellers.

Spurning of the midnight amp

If there's one thing the Pro Controller lacks, it's a headphone port. But that's less of an issue now that the Switch finally supports Bluetooth audio.

The wind cries pairy

Whether via USB-C or Bluetooth, you can also connect this pad to your gaming PC (Steam deals with the buttons' reverse layout). It even works with mobile devices.



MARVEL'S MIDNIGHT SUNS

Arriving just as the MCU is also getting weirder, this Marvel game trades the usual action-orientated superhero antics for tactical gameplay. It's what you might expect from the developers behind *XCOM*, although using each hero's abilities from a deck of cards still leads to some flashy sequences, while you can use the environment to your advantage.

What sets *Midnight Suns* apart is that you'll actually be creating your own superhero, who can be fully customised in appearance, play styles and relationships with other heroes. Yes, here's a game where you can just hang out with your favourite Marvel icons over a pint.

PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1,
Switch, PC / 7 Oct

COMING SOON TO CONSOLES

Sequels dominate... but whether on PS, Xbox or Switch, here's what you can look forward to this year and beyond



STREET FIGHTER 6

The last entry in the great fighting series may have had a bumpy road, but *SF6* is set to give us a real next-gen game — with not only a fully 3D world to explore outside of the traditional fights, but also realistic visuals that still have a distinctive graffiti style. More importantly, it has a simplified control option and real-time commentators.

PS5, PS4, XSX, PC / 2023



SPLATOON 3

Despite starting out as a family-friendly take on the team shooter, *Splatoon* is one of Nintendo's freshest franchises that's actually down with the kids. That's still the case with its third outing, which takes a more post-apocalyptic vibe as Inklings and Octolings battle it out on new maps with new weapons. The grapple looks especially handy.

Switch / 9 Sep



THE CALLISTO PROTOCOL

In this spiritual successor to sci-fi horror *Dead Space*, you're a prisoner in a colony on one of Jupiter's moons, Callisto, in the midst of an alien invasion. What's worse: the ruthless corporate machines that will blow your head off in a trice, or being pursued by reanimated monstrosities from the shadows?

PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, PC / 2 Dec



POKEMON SCARLET/VIOLET

After *Arceus* earlier this year, the official ninth generation of Pokémon looks set to be the true evolution that fans have been clamouring for. Set in a new open-world region seemingly inspired by Spain, *Scarlet* and *Violet* can also be played with friends in four-player online co-op for the first time.

Of course, it's going to be all about the Pokémon themselves, with everyone so far being won over by a cute pig type fittingly named Lechonk. As in the past, each version of the game will have certain Pokémon exclusive to that title that can only be collected via trading.

However, players will also have to decide which version they want based on which new professor they most like the look of: Sada (a sort of sexy Flintstone) or Turo (a boybander gone solo).

Switch / 18 November



THE LAST OF US PART 1

In 2013, *The Last Of Us* was a landmark masterpiece for the PS3, which got a handsome PS4 remaster the following year. Now Naughty Dog has remade it from the ground up for the PS5, with even more realistic visuals and animations that aim to better capture its stars' amazing performances.

PS5 / 2 Sep (PC date tba)



FINAL FANTASY 16

It may have a grittier feel more reminiscent of *The Witcher*, while the turn-based combat has been jettisoned for fast-paced action with just a single character, but the next chapter in the RPG series with the most misleading title ever looks incredible... and has some serious talent behind it. Plus you can summon godlike Eikons to fight one another. Epic.

PS5 / 2023



SAINTS ROW

The soft reboot of one of the better *GTA* clones may be dialling back the OTT absurdities with its new generation of criminals looking to make a name for themselves, but one thing you can count on staying the same is its freedom of expression. You can download the Boss Factory demo right now to create your own protagonist.

PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, PC / 23 Aug

HARDWARE FOR THE HARDCORE

Whether you're got a beefy rig or a gaming laptop, these accessories are ideal for any PC player

WINDOWS DRESSING



SAMSUNG PORTABLE SSD T5

If you're in need of more storage space, a portable SSD is just the job – and it'll give much faster USB-C transfer speeds than the old HDDs. This one comes in 500GB, 1TB or a whopping 2TB. from £74 / samsung.com



ANKER 4-PORT USB 3.0 ULTRA SLIM DATA HUB

If all these PC accessories are taking up your ports, you need a USB hub. This one should start you off nicely with four additional ports, but there are variants with even more. from £13 / uk.anker.com

STEELSERIES APEX PRO

When it comes to PC gaming, you can't beat the tactile clacking of a mechanical keyboard. And if you're about to make the switch, then you might as well go all-in. The SteelSeries Apex Pro may be a pricey proposition but it's a solid investment that's guaranteed to last you beyond a mind-boggling 100 million keypresses.

The secret sauce is that each of its magnetic key switches can be adjusted. So whether you're typing or gaming, and whether that's a fast-paced shooter or a more thoughtful strategy game, you can customise the actuation of every key so that it feels exactly how you want it to be for any situation. Compared to standard

mechanical keyboards, these switches also boast faster response and actuation right out of the gate.

Further customisation is offered by a mini OLED display just above the number pad, alongside a volume wheel and media key. This allows you to set a custom image, or even a GIF, to make this Apex Pro truly your own. Oh, and let's not forget the RGB backlighting, which you can tailor to your preferences with per-key illumination.

The sturdy frame, made from aircraft-grade aluminium alloy, has a lean design with virtually no space beyond where the keys are, so it won't fill your desk like other keyboards – although you

will want to keep the wrist rest magnetically attached at the bottom, since it's going to provide vital comfort for any extended sessions.

Granted, there are cheaper mechanical alternatives on the market, but the Apex Pro lives up to its name by dominating other high-end keyboards in its price range. So if you're prepared to splash the cash, you may just come out on top.

Price £200 / stuff.tv/ApexPro

Key specs

● OmniPoint adjustable mechanical switches ● USB pass-through ● 0.4mm–3.6mm actuation ● 1kg

STUFF SAYS A high-end board for those seeking ultra-customisation ★★★★★



CORSAIR HS80 RGB WIRELESS

£160 / corsair.com
The RGB lighting isn't the best part of this headset – it's the audio, with 50mm drivers outputting up to 24-bit/48kHz audio over its Slipstream Wireless technology so you can hear every sound from the quietest whisper to the loudest boom. You'll also make yourself heard with one of the best mics around. **Stuff says ★★★★★**



KLIM CYCLONE

€40 / klimtechs.com

Gaming laptops heat up fast, so a cooling mat can be an important accessory to have. The Cyclone includes five fans to keep your laptop chilled, and they do the job quietly – with a stated maximum of 27dB. Compatible with laptops of various sizes, it also doubles as a stand, with legs providing eight different inclination levels to suit your gaming position. **Stuff says ★★★★★**



RAZER BASILISK V3

£70 / razer.com

Hardcore PC gamers still stick to the reliable tech of wired gaming mice, even if wireless ones are now getting to the point where any latency is barely noticeable. This Basilisk is the best, with an ergonomic design and full customisation for its 11 programmable buttons, plus a scroll wheel that lets you toggle between two types of scrolling. **Stuff says ★★★★★**



LOGITECH C920S PRO

£85 / logitech.com

Whether you're a streamer or working from home, this is an excellent webcam that delivers fine picture quality at 30fps (1080p Full HD on video calls or 720p when streaming games), while dual mics offer clear stereo sound. A handy shutter can also be flipped down, not only to protect the camera's lens but also to ensure your privacy. **Stuff says ★★★★★☆**

Tidy dancer

Under the keyboard frame, built-in channels mean you can keep cables from stretching or getting in the way, with three exit points to choose from.

Rocket scan

That OLED display also acts as a command centre for various games and apps: instantly read your KDA stats in *CS:GO* or check Discord messages.

The titch is back

Looking to save a bit of space and money? There's a TKL version of the Apex Pro without the number pad but still with all the other smart features (£190).

WARHAMMER 40,000: DARKTIDE

You may think of *Warhammer* as a game viewed from overhead... but just as *Vermintide* took Games Workshop's tabletop gaming franchise into the first-person perspective with co-op melee, so *Darktide* does for the world of 40k. But you're no Space Marine here: you and your three companions are the lowest of the low, albeit still with unique classes and backstories to choose from, who will need to work

together in order to survive the overwhelming Chaos taking over the city of Tertium.

Darktide features a mixture of *Vermintide*'s melee combat and gunplay (with lasguns, plasma cannons and such like). Fans of 40k can also expect rich world-building as they work their way through Tertium taking on ever-suicidal missions for the zealous Inquisition.

PC, XSX / 13 Sep



COMING SOON TO YOUR PC

From hardcore shooters to deep management and life sims to take over your world, these titles ought to click



TWO POINT CAMPUS

Two Point Studios' latest sees you creating your very own university. Besides building teaching facilities, recruiting staff and deciding on the quirky curriculum (such as how to become a knight), you'll also need to look after the students by providing cultural events and activities... but don't let them go too wild, eh? **PC, PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, Switch / 9 Aug**



HOMEWORLD 3

A long-awaited sequel to one of the most feted real-time strategy games, *Homeworld 3* builds on what made the original title unique: it's an RTS in outer space that's really in full 3D space, as you build and navigate ships in epic combat. A deep, compelling story is promised, with key info to pick up from fellow pilots and commanders in battlefield chatter. **PC / 2023**



STEELRISING

Potentially the next best thing to *Bloodborne*, this action RPG is set in Paris in 1789, where Louis XVI has raised a mechanical army to crush the revolution. You play as Aegis, an automaton who will become the revolution's great hope. Originally engineered to be a dancer, she's highly acrobatic – allowing for a lot of verticality when exploring Paris, and when evading foes. **PC, PS5, XSX / 8 Sep**



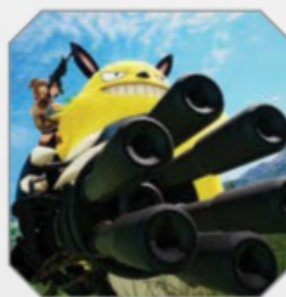
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: GOLLUM

As a new chapter in Tolkien's saga opens with the upcoming Amazon TV series, this game focuses on the antihero Gollum. Given his weedy form this is going to be more of a stealth game as he keeps to the shadows in search of his precious, while also enduring a duel between his two identities. **PC, PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1 / 1 Sep (Switch date tba)**



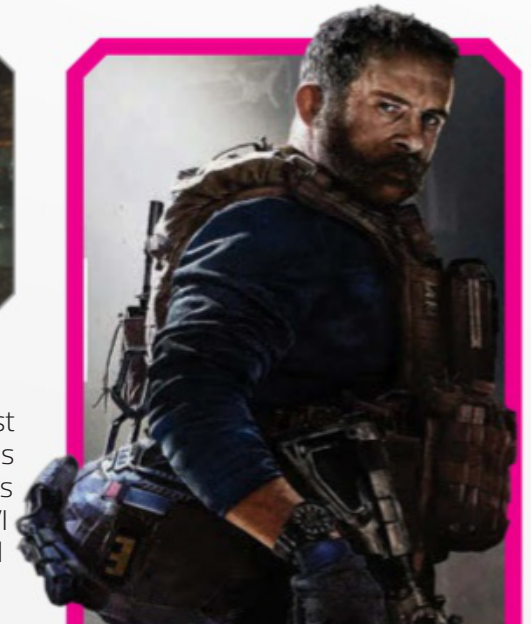
DISNEY DREAMLIGHT VALLEY

If you thought the *Kingdom Hearts* series was disappearing up its own backside, this feels like the perfect antidote. Essentially it's 'Disney does *Animal Crossing*', as you get to build and live in your own dream home in a place populated by other recognisable Disney and Pixar characters. **PC, PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, Switch / 2023**



PALWORLD

For people who have outgrown *Pokemon*, or want their *Pokemon* more grown up, this peculiar title is a real eye-catcher. It's a multiplayer open-world survival game where you can befriend and collect creatures called Pals. Sounds pretty familiar, until you see that these critters can also wield machine guns in battle... and be used as forced factory labour. **PC / date tba**



CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE II

If last year's trip back to WWII got a rather frosty reception, Activision looks set to take back its FPS blockbuster crown by returning to its reboot of *Modern Warfare*. Familiar faces from the iconic Task Force 141 will be on a globetrotting campaign that's set to be more explosive and immersive than ever, thanks to an entirely new engine built by the series' three main developers: Infinity Ward, Sledgehammer Games and Treyarch.

Besides new multiplayer maps and modes, *Modern Warfare II* will also coincide with the release of a sequel to the ever-popular battle royale *Warzone*, while this October launch also marks the return of the franchise to Steam. **PC, PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1 / 28 Oct**

IN GOOD HANDS

You can't beat gaming on the go – so here's the kit you need to make those sessions even more comfortable and convenient

BEYOND HANDHELD



LAMICALL GOOSENECK TABLET HOLDER LS02

Who says handheld gaming needs to be in your hands? For maximum comfort, clamp this to your desk, coffee table, even bedframe, and adjust so your phone, tablet or Switch is held at the best distance.

£24 / lamicall.com



UNI USB-C TO HDMI CABLE

If you'd rather transfer your mobile experience to the big screen, you can – just by getting a USB-C to HDMI cable. This is a pretty simple setup, though you can always opt for a USB hub if you want to connect more gadgets.

£17 / amazon.co.uk

RAZER KISHI V2

Whether you're using streaming services like Stadia, Luna and Xbox Game Pass to play console-grade titles on your blower or digging into the latest Google Play hits, touch controls don't always cut it.

You don't want to be covering half the screen playing finger twister while wrestling with *Asphalt 9* or *Halo Infinite*.

You can always grab a cheap clip for a Bluetooth gamepad, but Razer's Kishi V2 provides a better way. You slot your phone into the bone-shaped device, whereupon the combined entity resembles something akin to a Switch – or, if you're old, a PSP.

The downside is outlay: this controller's price tag is double

that of a traditional console pad. But its compact form fits easily into a bag, while the USB-C connection guarantees lag-free input and negates the need to worry about charging the thing. (And pass-through charging is an option, if you drain your phone during a suitably epic session of *Forza Horizon 5*.)

The Kishi V2 is comfortable, with an ergonomic frame good for hours of game time. More importantly, the controls have a premium feel, with responsive, clicky buttons and triggers that demand a little pressure rather than instantly collapsing under a gnat's breath.

One other potential snag is compatibility: the Kishi won't

work with every game on your phone – and an iPhone version doesn't even exist (it's due later this year). Still, Razer's Nexus app points you at suitable Android titles, such as *Grid Autosport* and *Death Road To Canada*. It's supported by emulators too – great when you want to delve into gaming's past using tactile controls, rather than your fingers sliding all over the shop while you try to avoid getting horribly murdered in *Robotron: 2084*.

Price £100 / stuff.tv/Kishi2

Key specs

- USB-C (with pass-through)
- Android only ● 284g

STUFF SAYS A sleek (if pricey) way to turn your phone into a console ★★★★★



BACKBONE ONE

£100 / playbackbone.com

Similar to the Kishi V2 but for iPhone owners, the Backbone One has rounded edges that make it comfy in the hands. Essential if you're an iPhone user subscribed to Apple Arcade, playing major games like *Genshin Impact*, streaming on one of the major services, or playing your PlayStation or Xbox remotely.

Stuff says ★★★★★



EPOS GTW 270 HYBRID

£129 / eposaudio.com

A headset might be a bit much for gaming on the bus, so a good pair of Bluetooth wireless buds will do the job. These are built for game audio and guaranteed for 5hrs of listening time, while you can charge them in the included case. What makes them a 'hybrid' is a USB-C dongle that can also be plugged into your PlayStation or Switch.

Stuff says ★★★★★



RAZER RAIJU

£109 / razer.com

It may be a few years old now but the Raiju is still one of the few dedicated mobile controllers around, in that it's built with an adjustable mount for your Android phone. Otherwise, this looks and feels just like a proper gamepad. It comes with an optional hair trigger mode and other configurations, and you can even use it with a PC.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆



ANKER POWERCORE 20100

£45 / uk.anker.com

Gaming is juice-draining for any mobile device, so if you're on a long trip a power bank is a must. Anker's PowerCores are among the best, and at 20,000mAh this one has the capacity to fill you up multiple times – even if you're playing on a Switch. Two USB ports mean you can charge more than one device at a time too.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Shoulder of fortune

You get more than just face buttons here: the Kishi V2 sports shoulder buttons and triggers too, offering flexibility for tense shooters and fast racing games.

Black tight

A typical Android phone will fit snugly inside. If your blower's more chunky – or lives in a case – remove the Kishi's rubber cushions for a bit more room.

Strange kind of nubbin

Four unfamiliar buttons adorn the front: Options and Menu mimic Select and Start; Nexus returns you to the app; and Share lets you capture stills and videos.

ZENLESS ZONE ZERO

It's been impossible to ignore the phenomenon of *Genshin Impact*, an anime open-world game that's proven itself more than just a Chinese knock-off of *Breath Of The Wild* thanks to its fun combat and constantly growing roster of memorable characters. So it should come as no surprise that we're getting more than slightly excited about the next big thing arriving from its creators, HoYoverse.

While details are scarce right now, we do know that *Zenless Zone Zero* has more of a post-apocalyptic future vibe — it's set in the metropolis of New Eridu, where humanity is under threat from Ethereals invading through portals known as Hollows. Expect HoYoverse's familiar brand of fast-paced action and cute character designs.

Android, iOS, PC / date tba

COMING SOON TO MOBILE

Look out for these titles making their way to the small screen, from rebooted classics to new blockbusters



STAR WARS: HUNTERS

Stakes are high on the planet of Vespaara as a diverse class of hunters, from wookies to droids to mandalorians, even lightsaber-wielders, battle it out in third-person combat. These arenas will also span multiple battlegrounds evoking iconic Star Wars worlds, from an Ewok village to the sandy ridge on Tatooine.

Android, iOS, Switch / date tba



CALL OF DUTY WARZONE MOBILE

Given just how popular Activision's shooter has become, especially since parachuting in with its own standalone take on battle royale, it was only a matter of time before it went mobile. Early leaks indicate it will feature the original Verdansk map, while getting killed early will see players fighting it out in the gulag.

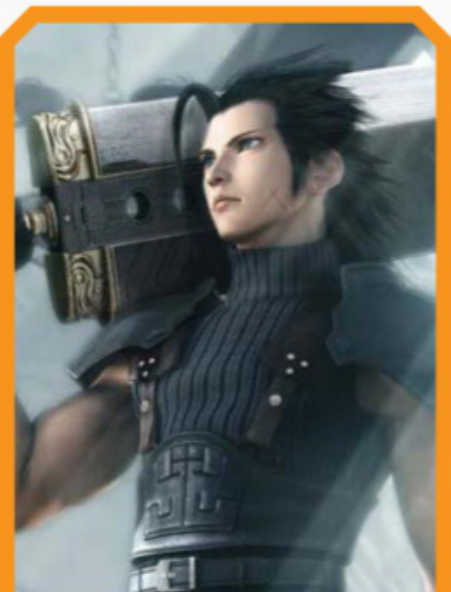
Android, iOS / date tba



WARCRAFT ARCLIGHT RUMBLE

While it's best-known these days for the PC MMO, *Warcraft* was originally a strategy game... and it sort of returns there with this spin-off. The inspiration is perhaps more *Clash Of Clans*, except you've got over 65 miniatures based on iconic *Warcraft* characters, each with its own unique abilities that can help turn the tide.

Android, iOS / date tba



FINAL FANTASY VII: EVER CRISIS

The ambitious *Final Fantasy VII* remake project is already off to an epic start, first on PlayStation and now on PC. But while we wait for the next chapter, *Ever Crisis* aims to retell the entire *Final Fantasy VII* saga through monthly instalments, covering not just events from the original game but also the canonical spin-offs such as *Before Crisis*, *Crisis Core*, *Dirge Of Cerberus*... and presumably even the movie sequel, *Advent Children*.

There's an interesting number of visual styles being incorporated into *Ever Crisis*, from the classic 'deformed 3D' look of the first game to the incredible visuals of the remake in battle sequences, which use the original Active Time Battle system.

Last we heard for this one was a possible launch date of late September.

iOS, Android / date tba



NARAKA BLADEPOINT MOBILE

Naraka Bladepoint breathes new life into the battle royale genre with a smaller player count of 60 and smaller maps, all the better to focus on its up-close melee combat as players clash blades with perfectly timed parries or embrace their inner *wuxia* warrior by grappling up trees.

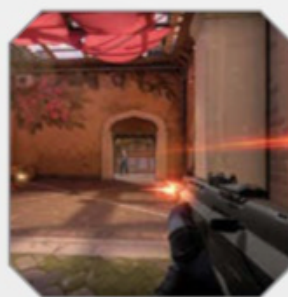
Android, iOS / date tba



WIZARDRY VA

This dungeon-crawling RPG classic, which first appeared on Apple computers, was the inspiration behind such beloved titles as *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy*; and now a new chapter is coming to mobile. The 3D dungeon-crawling has a more Japanese art style, but it should be just as hardcore, with each door a potential death trap.

Android, iOS / date tba



VALORANT MOBILE

Riot Games' take on the hero shooter crossed with the hardcore tactical play of *CS:GO* has already proven a favourite on PC, and it's coming to your phone. Details have been scarce since the announcement was made last year, but we're assured this 5v5 shooter will retain "the same competitive *Valorant* experience".

Android, iOS / date tba

The ROG prince

With its imperious power and some specialised accessories thrown in, can the latest chunky Asus set a new standard for gaming phones?

from £899 / stuff.tv/rog6

Smartphones are the handheld consoles of our time, but some are more committed to on-the-go gaming than others – and for the Asus ROG Phone 6 it's very much a top priority.

With a Snapdragon 8+ Gen 1 under the hood (the same chip found in Samsung's Galaxy S22 Ultra, and one that can hold its own against Apple's A13 Bionic and Intel's laptop CPUs) plus 16GB of RAM, 512GB of storage, and a sharp 6.78in screen that offers a higher-than-strictly-necessary 165Hz refresh rate, it has all the stuff we'd be looking for in a top phone, gaming or not.

So what makes the ROG Phone 6 particularly suited to mobile fragging? The additional USB-C port halfway up the left-hand side is a clue, because it comes with more accessories than any phone we've ever seen, including a dedicated clip-on controller and a fan to keep it cool when things get frantic. So can it make the most of all that power?

Handful and Gretel

The first thing that strikes you about the ROG Phone 6 is that it's big and heavy. It's tall rather than wide (1), which means you'll need big hands to operate it easily, or resort to using two. There's a one-handed option built into the software, but it's not great.

The brave little flailer

With a powerful CPU and plenty of RAM, there's not much that'll slow this Asus down. Notoriously demanding games like *XCOM: Enemy Within* play just fine, editing video is a breeze and you can throw around browser windows and Google Docs without a hint of lag.

The pied sniper

Unsurprisingly, photography isn't the main focus here, but images from the main 50MP camera (3) are nicely balanced and the selfie cam can take some great shots too – though the ultrawide lens has fairly limited use. If you're happy to stick to 24fps, it can also shoot 8K video.

Snow trite

Leaving the phone naked exposes the naff 'Dare To Play' and 'For Those Who Dare' branding. You might want to get a cover.

Lumpy stilted skin

The ROG UI is a bit garish (2), while the Armoury Crate app – which includes both social media feeds and lighting controls – is a strange combo of useful and totally useless. The Game Genie overlay is much more helpful, putting the phone's full-power X-mode just a swipe away.

The golden juice

The battery will easily last a whole day or more if you stick to the standard stuff like WhatsApp and Twitter. Use the 165Hz refresh rate, switch on X-mode and attach the external cooler without plugging it in, however, and it'll only give you a few hours before sputtering out.



GOOD
MEH
EVIL

Cor, this
thing's
hefty

The clip-on
controller
feels flimsy

It's got
loads of
power...

...but it
doesn't want
to run *Bully*

Limiting the
refresh rate
saves power

The camera
offers 'pro'
controls



Tech specs

Screen 6.78in 1080x2448 165Hz AMOLED
Processor Snapdragon 8+ Gen 1 **RAM** 12/16GB
Storage 512GB **OS** Android 12 **Cameras** 50+13MP rear, 32MP front **Battery** 6000mAh (USB-C, Qi)
Dimensions 173x77x10.3mm, 239g

Tappy, thumpy and gropey

It may be just another black rectangle running Android, but it's packed with alternative ways to interact with it



■ Mashful

As well as an active cooling fan that doubles as a stand, you get a pair of Joy-Con-like controllers with analogue sticks and an additional button underneath. It's when using these that the ROG Phone 6 is at its best.



■ Dock

Like Joy-Cons, these mini gamepads clip into a frame to become a single, more traditional 'pro' controller... although it's very light and flexes alarmingly, while the triggers and face buttons don't put up much resistance.



■ Squeezy

The phone's chassis also has Air Triggers – sensitive areas that can be squeezed to provide another input option. There's even a patch on the back that can be double-tapped to turn on the torch or open the camera app.



■ Peepy

There's also a tiny screen on the back that can display a small amount of information, such as the time, battery charge level and incoming call ID. It's not always on, though: you have to invoke it with a tap.



Gaming phones, it turns out, are a bit like gaming PCs. Once you get past the obnoxious branding, you find a powerful bundle of components that's good for most things. Despite being bogged down with extra software, the ROG Phone 6 is quick to use, while the accessories show that some thought has been put into actually using it for gaming. *@ievenden*

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

This is a powerful phone built with the gamer in mind, but not in a way that makes it inaccessible to 'normal' users

BETA YOURSELF MOBILE GAMING



In case you still think 'proper' games only exist on consoles and expensive PCs, Craig Grannell is here with all the tips for getting more playtime power out of your phone or tablet

THE BASICS

■ Optimise playback

Mobile devices are more powerful than ever, but they still lack the clout of high-end gaming rigs. When playing demanding mobile titles, use the best hardware you can and improve playback by turning off notifications and power-hungry background apps. And when playing online, make sure your internet connection is solid – unless you like losing.

■ Get set

Think through your setup prior to starting a game. About to immerse yourself in an hours-long bout of thinky strategy? Plonk your tablet in a stand. Into fast-paced multitouch arcade fare? Play with your device flat on a table. Want to try a twitchy



platformer or complex FPS? Use a controller rather than relying on your touchscreen.

■ Go mobile-first

A brief trip through the history of gaming shows that the best titles are often those designed for specific systems. So rather than going straight for mobile ports of console classics, dig into titles created for touchscreens. Check out

stuff.tv for regularly-updated lists of the best Android and iPhone games around.

■ Don't waste money

Avoid 'VIP' subscriptions that provide little of worth – and games that demand you pay to progress. Go for IAP that adds real value: new levels, no ads, bonus items you like the look of. Only subscribe to services (or solo titles like *Fancade*) that use your cash to keep the lights on.

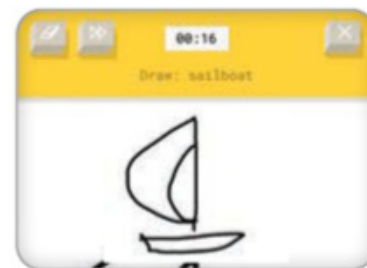
■ Use your time well

Your phone's always on your person and it's easy to fritter hours away on mobile games. If it starts to get out of hand, use your device's screen time system to set daily limits for the titles in question. And consider mobile efforts with bite-sized daily challenges that fill odd moments while giving your brain a workout.



Let that sync in

Like to play games on more than one device? Look for games with online progress sync, so you can start on one and continue on another.



USE YOUR BROWSER

■ Word up

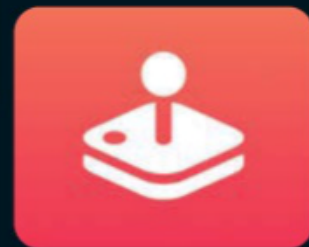
Web browsers can be the quickest route to gaming goodness. That's especially so for daily puzzles – the most obvious case being *Wordle*, now at nytimes.com, which invites you to guess a word across six rounds then brag about it on Twitter.

■ Draw inspiration

If you fancy something more tuned to a touchscreen, try *Quick, Draw!* This freebie Google AI experiment has you scribble against the clock, the aim being to make a neural network recognise your pitiful attempts at art.

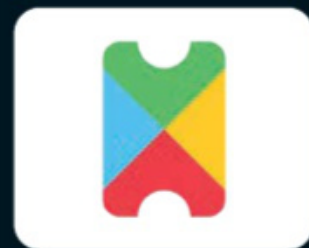


LIKE AND SUBSCRIBE



APPLE ARCADE

Arcade started out as a home for ambitious mobile exclusives and experimental fare, before pivoting hard to 'freemium minus IAP' and then welding a load of old classics to its collection. So it's a mess... but as part of Apple One, it's a bargain. **£4.99/m / apple.com**



GOOGLE PLAY PASS

Google's answer to Apple Arcade lacks exclusives, but your monthly fiver (or £30 a year) unlocks access to a heaving stack of premium games including *Limbo*, *Mini Metro*, *Star Wars: KOTOR* and *Thimbleweed Park*. **£4.99/m / google.com**



ANTSTREAM PREMIUM

Native on Android and coming soon to iPhone browsers, Antstream is all about playing ancient games on the go. Yes, emulators exist, but this is worth the outlay for the zero-hassle setup. **£39.99/yr / antstream.com**



TRY PICO-8

■ Console yourself

If you claim you loved playing on your childhood Pico-8, you're fibbing, given that it didn't exist back then. It's a fantasy console for PCs – but you can head to lexaloffle.com and play Pico-8 games, free of charge, in a browser.

■ Boot up some classics

The number of Pico-8 carts is terrifyingly large. Start with pahammond's retro remakes, morningtoast's frenetic *Invader Overload* and noel's hard-as-nails platformer *Celeste*, which is like *Bionic Commando* reimagined by a sociopath.



PLAY SOME AAA HITS

■ Turn cloudy

Xbox Cloud Gaming lets you play AAA classics – and the yonked-from-app-stores battle royale *Fortnite* – on a phone. You'll need an Xbox Game Pass Ultimate sub, which is £10.99/m, but you can try it out for a quid.

■ Button up

Microsoft knows phones lack gamepads, so its service includes a 'play with touch' category. It's a stretch to say these titles are truly optimised (virtual buttons ahoy!), but you can play without additional hardware.

■ Take control

For a more slick experience, use a gamepad instead. You'll almost believe someone's shoved a high-end console inside your phone. Well, assuming the streaming gameplay doesn't glitch.



GO RETRO

■ Relive the glory days

For greying gamers, Android might be a better bet than Apple since you can install a pile of emulators and set about recreating your gaming youth. Do use a controller, mind – ancient titles are unforgiving when it comes to virtual controls.

■ Play up front

Launching emulators and prodding file names won't fully twang your nostalgia nubbin. So use an organising front-end like ARC Browser, Dig or RESET Collection to gawp at gorgeous box art before diving into the games.

Stuff

DIGITAL EDITION



Available from shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff
plus Readly, Pocketmags & Apple News+

Bland on the run

A fitness tracker doesn't need to be sexy, it just needs to track fitness. So is Garmin's latest basic band worthy of your wrist?

Ties like us

Straps are easy to swap (no pin-poking necessary), and there's a 'cool mint' option for those keen to coordinate with their Mentos.



£130 / stuff.tv/Vivosmart5

■ It's easy to forget you're wearing Garmin's latest tracker. That's partly because it's so lightweight and low-profile – even the larger size weighs less than 27g – and partly because it looks so blandly generic. But it feels pretty sturdy, plus it's swim-proof.

■ With no GPS onboard you'll need to connect the Vivosmart 5 to your phone to record location data, but pairing is swift and the routes we logged compared favourably to the built-in GPS of a Polar Vantage V2. You do get optical heart-rate and blood-oxygen monitors, together with an ambient light sensor and accelerometer.

■ The Vivosmart 5 supports up to 10 sport profiles, including running, swimming and HIIT. But indoor cycling is absent... and the metrics shown are often too small to read quickly in mid-workout.

■ Garmin doesn't hide any data or features behind a subscription: you get the full-fat experience for free, complete with in-depth insights into your activity. And while the level of feedback on offer might be more than most users need, the Connect app is nice and intuitive.

■ Our Vivosmart 5 conked out halfway through day seven. Ramp up the brightness to its top setting and you'll lose around a day versus the auto mode; switch the Pulse Ox sensor to 24/7 and you'll do well to get four days between charges.



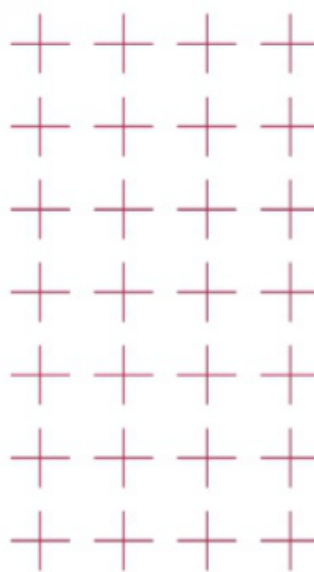
■ Gripes of peace

The monochrome touchscreen squeezes in a lot of data but it's fiddly for bigger fingers – getting your taps on target can be tricky during a sweaty session. Widgets are fine for quick glances, but phone notifications feel cramped.



■ We all band together

There's a button on the front that can be used to wake the device, open its menu and return to the home screen. There is a slight learning curve with activity commands but it doesn't take too long to get the hang of it.



Tech specs

Display 0.73x0.41in 154x88 OLED touchscreen **OS** Garmin Watch OS **Battery life** 7 days **Sensors** Heart rate, blood oxygen, accelerometer, ambient light **Water-resistance** 5ATM **Connectivity** Bluetooth, ANT+ **Weight** 24.5g/26.5g

STUFF SAYS Offers a lot of tracking smarts for a relatively affordable price ★★★★★

No more lonely frights: this little band is the only friend you need

Chris Rowlands



Its design is familiar, bordering on dull. Its display is small, monochrome and awkward to interact with. And you need a connected smartphone for location data. But despite all its shortcomings, the Vivosmart 5 performs well where it matters: fitness tracking. You'd be daft to use it as a serious training tool, but as a simple way to log steps, sleep and exercise – and get surprisingly detailed free feedback – it delivers.

TECH TITANS

Apple iPod

RIP, thin white jukebox. So which was the best?



Diamond lugs

Those telltale white earphones were a stroke of marketing genius, immediately letting everybody know you were using an iPod.

Wire are we now?

The first iPod needed a FireWire cable to transfer songs and charge the battery, so it's a miracle it even made it to a second.

01 IPOD (1ST GENERATION)

In 2001, an unassuming white box arrived and transformed the gadget world. Good job it did too: if Apple had carried on just making computers, we might all be walking around today listening to MiniDiscs, taking photos on compact cameras and making calls on Nokias. Imagine!

In terms of design, the original iPod was a classic. It had a scroll wheel that

actually turned – a clever system that in many ways beats a touchscreen for the tactile pleasure of scanning from Abba to Zappa – and four buttons around it that made a satisfying click when pressed. With 5GB of storage (generous at the time) and an interface that didn't make you want to punch your own face off, Apple's first iPod was

nonetheless derided by plenty of people who didn't see its potential – including some in the *Stuff* office. Little did they know that people love usability... and are willing to pay for it. Add in the iTunes Store, and a new way to listen to music was born.

The third-gen model switched to a touch wheel, added glowing buttons and welcomed Windows users

to the party, while the fifth version went a bit skinnier and even introduced video playback (albeit only good for watching dodgy rips that you'd spend ages getting into a format that would actually play); but the original was the perfect example of Apple taking something that already existed and improving it immeasurably.

RELEASED 2001

The jeans genie

To show just how tiny the original Nano was, Steve Jobs introduced it by removing one from the coin pocket of his trousers.

02 iPOD NANO

In 2004, Apple launched the iPod Mini, but after only 18 months it was dead and the company's obsession with miniaturisation began in earnest. The even tinier Nano was the result.

Out went hard drives and in came flash. Out went capacity too, with the high-end version packing just 4GB and the cheapest a measly 1GB. Still, that was more than enough for our gym playlists, and the Nano was a brilliant running companion. This meant the Nano stuck around and rapidly became a playground for Apple's designers, getting a radical overhaul almost annually.

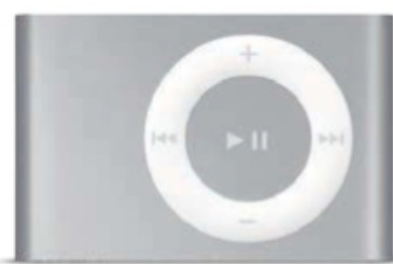
After seven generations that went through various formats – including the squarer third-gen that added video playback, 2009's fifth-gen that had a larger 2.2in screen for landscape video playback, and the last two that switched scroll wheels for touchscreens – the Nano was finally put out to pasture in 2017.

RELEASED 2005

**03 iPOD TOUCH**

Sorry, purists – we've decided the Touch is a 'proper' iPod and not just an old-school SIM-less iPhone that somebody ran over with a steamroller. For a relatively small outlay, you got the iPhone's most important bits – a touchscreen and access to the App Store – making it a great iPhone alternative for kids. It was absurdly light too, with the final iteration weighing just 88g.

RELEASED 2007

**04 iPOD SHUFFLE (2ND GENERATION)**

The original Shuffle looked like a USB memory stick with playback controls attached – because that's more or less what it was. This screenless player was designed to help you rediscover your music by randomly playing back songs, but it really came of age with the gym-friendly 'clip' model. Its dock was truly awful, but we were too besotted to really notice.

RELEASED 2005

**05 iPOD CLASSIC**

The original iPod finally evolved into the iPod Classic in 2007. By 2009 it boasted a 160GB hard drive, but was starting to look rather long in the tooth compared to assorted touchscreen-based upstarts. Yet it remained popular with hardcore music fans, acting as a kind of badge of honour that showed how unimpressed you were with low-bitrate streaming services.

RELEASED 2007

ALMOST GREAT IPODS**iPod Nano (6th generation) 2010**

Part embiggened iPod Shuffle and part wannabe iPhone – and it was possible to turn it into a sort of proto Apple Watch.

**iPod Mini 2004**

Another great example of how people will buy something if it's genuinely lovely, the Mini looked gorgeous... but storage was limited.

**iPod Nano (5th generation) 2009**

Recording was fiddly and you only got VGA output, but the fifth-gen Nano was the first iPod to get a video camera. It also had a radio.

**iPod Shuffle (3rd generation) 2009**

A reminder that Apple's obsession with removing ports and buttons goes way back, this one banished all controls to the earbuds.

Mature shot

The latest Xperia has high-end everything, but can it compete with novice-friendly flagships?

£1299 / stuff.tv/Xperia1iv

■ Meet the mobile equivalent of a sharp business suit. The Sony Xperia 1 IV is tall, slim and angular, with an all-black frame squeezed between two slabs of glass. It's an iconic look that's familiar but refreshingly distinct from anything else in the phone world.

■ The 4K OLED is stunningly detailed, colours are superbly accurate and it's received a much-needed brightness boost. In order to save battery it doesn't run at its full native resolution all the time, though.

■ The three 12MP rear cameras are flexible, fast and capable, with impressive manual controls – plus useful added smarts like real-time object-tracking and true variable zoom. If you take a great shot it's because you did all the hard work, not because the algorithms fixed everything for you.

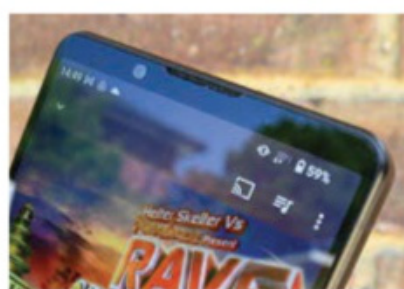
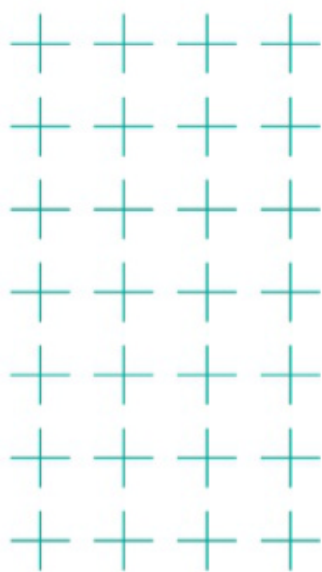
■ With a Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 and 12GB of RAM, this is a real powerhouse, switching smoothly between apps, but it does very occasionally throttle performance to avoid overheating. The refresh rate also drops from 120Hz to 60Hz when it needs to cool down.

■ The 5000mAh battery should last you a full day of intense use, with a 50% top-up taking about half an hour and a full charge less than two hours. That's well behind Xiaomi and Oppo, but on a par with Samsung and Apple.

Tech specs

Screen 6.5in 3840x1644 120Hz OLED **Processor** Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 **RAM** 12GB **Storage** 256GB (+ microSD) **OS** Android 12 **Cameras** 12+12+12MP rear, 12MP front **Battery** 5000mAh (USB-C, Qi) **Dimensions** 165x71x8.2mm, 185g

Flight for your right to porty
Who still offers expandable storage, 3.5mm headphone ports and notification LEDs? This Xperia has all three.



Squeeze on it

The screen bezels are certainly thicker than some, but they're in no way distracting. There's no notch or punch-hole camera getting in the way – and it leaves room at the top and bottom for a fine pair of stereo speakers.



Proddy movin'

Sony has ditched the Google Assistant button, with a long press of the power button now doing that job. It also doubles as a quick and accurate fingerprint sensor, but still doesn't feel very natural for left-handed users.

STUFF SAYS Doubles down on the good stuff – but it's for skilled snappers only ★★★★★

Intergalactic camera smarts set this classy phone apart

Tom Morgan-Freelander



Sony has long accepted that its flagship phones aren't aimed at everyone, and the Xperia 1 IV is the latest evolution of that. It won't steal mainstream customers away from the Galaxy S22 Ultra or iPhone 13 Max, which are far happier to hold your hand on the photography front, but it improves in all the right areas and introduces some genuinely clever camera tech.

Brawn to be wild

However far your fitness regime takes you, Amazfit's ruffy-tuffy (and waterproof) smartwatch could save you a few quid

£219 / stuff.tv/TRex2

■ With the ability to withstand shock impacts and temperatures down to -34°C – including ice and freezing rain – and to cope with salt spray or high humidity without corroding, the T-Rex 2 is built for serious punishment.

■ The 1.39in circular AMOLED display is crisp and sharp, with excellent contrast and punchy colours. It could be a little quicker to wake up when you flick your wrist, but there is an always-on mode with a decent range of faces.

■ The Zepp OS is easy to navigate, either by touch or with the buttons, and puts all the key functions just a swipe away. There's no shortage of apps, but their usefulness is limited... and while you can install 'third-party' ones, the list is short and they're all by Amazfit anyway.

■ It can track more than 150 sports and activities, from running and swimming to skiing and triathlons. Tracking accuracy seems largely on a par with other sports watches; you can only export data to Google Fit, Apple Health and Strava.

■ If you're doing some serious exercise, recording your sleep, tracking heart rate and getting loads of phone notifications, even with the always-on screen enabled you should get 10 days from the T-Rex 2 between charges. We squeezed two weeks out of its 500mAh battery.

Tech specs

Display 1.39in 454x454 AMOLED touchscreen **OS** Zepp **Battery life** 24 days **Sensors** Accelerometer, gyroscope, altimeter, BioTracker, geomagnetic, ambient light **Water-resistance** 10ATM **Connectivity** Bluetooth 5 **Weight** 67g

Brawn slippery

Winter sports buffs should switch on the Extreme Low Temperature mode, which disables the touchscreen to save battery.



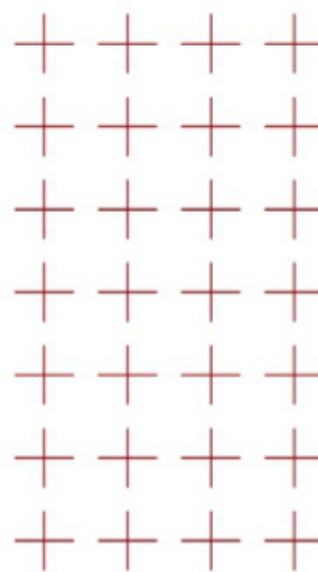
■ Brawn on the bayou

The watch is made from polymer alloy, which was tough enough to shrug off a few accidental bumps during our testing without picking up any scars. You can take the T-Rex 2 swimming in both the pool and the sea.



■ Brawn free

The thick bezels should keep the screen free from scratches, while the buttons on either side largely replicate the touchscreen controls – ideal when you're wearing gloves. The crown guard is just for show, though.



STUFF SAYS A capable fitness watch that can take more than a bit of rough stuff ★★★★★

Not the smartest watch, but this Amazfit was brawn to run

Tom Morgan-Freelander



Whatever your preferred sport, the T-Rex 2 will almost certainly be able to track it, and track it accurately. The rugged construction and chunky design help it fit in just about everywhere, from the slopes and the surf to your back garden, and it shrugs off the elements too. The 'smart' additions are on the basic side, and it lacks a few features that would let it truly excel, but it is significantly cheaper than an equivalent Garmin or Polar.

INSTANT UPGRADES CANON EOS R6



FIRST ADD
THESE...



ONE RODE WIRELESS GO II

You've upgraded your video by buying this excellent mirrorless camera; now all you need to do is level up your audio – so cut the cords for some wireless action. This set of compact mics can send their sound to your camera by way of a receiver, and can also be hooked up to bigger, better mics for even higher-quality wireless sound.

£219 / wexphotovideo.com

TWO ANKER 537 POWER BANK

The EOS R6 is part of a new wave of cameras that can charge via USB-C, but for that you'll need a charger that's compliant with power delivery (PD). Anker has just the ticket with this massive 26,800mAh USB-C PD power bank, able to refill your battery over 10 times for all-day shoots and weekends away.

£130 / uk.anker.com

THREE OWC ATLAS S PRO SDHC CARD

Futureproof your storage with OWC's incredibly nippy SD cards. With up to 275MB/s write and 290MB/s read speeds, whether you're shooting 4K 60fps video or tearing through 20fps RAW photos, OWC's cards are up to the task. You get a five-year limited warranty too.

from £28 / flexxmemory.co.uk



NOW TRY THIS...



1 STAY COOL

Shooting 4K video? The R6 might well overheat, so try these tips to keep it happy. First, make sure your firmware is up to date. Next, in settings, turn on 'Standby: Low res' – this dials back the resolution when you're not recording. If you don't need a wide-angle view, you can also turn on 'Movie cropping' in the settings to help a bit more. If you're still overheating, better dial it back to Full HD.



2 TAKE SHORTCUTS

If you've found your perfect settings, you can import them into one of your R6's three custom shortcut slots. First, fire up manual mode and tweak everything until it's just right. Next, dive into the menu, tap the wrench tool, select 'Custom shooting mode (C1-C3)' and register your settings. You can save up to three presets, and access them from the mode wheel on the top of the camera.



3 RING THE CHANGES

Each Canon RF lens packs a control ring – so if you want quick manual access to settings missing from the R6's body, hop into the menu, select the camera image at the top (next to the star) and choose 'Customize dials'. To control the lens ring, scroll to the bottom option and choose between aperture, ISO, exposure, AF mode, picture style, white balance and colour temperature.



4 GIVE IT SOME STICK

If you move your focus point on the regular, save yourself some time by assigning the camera's joystick to control it. In settings again, hop into the penultimate menu (with the camera icon on the right); on page three, select 'Customize buttons' and cycle through options until you see 'Multi-controllers'. Set this to 'Direct AF point selection'; you and your joystick are now a focusing dream team.



5 TOUCH AND GO

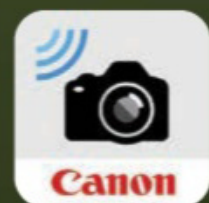
If all this focus-pocus is giving you a headache and you just want a smartphone-style touch-to-focus experience, flip out the screen and tap away. You can even bypass the shutter button by turning on touch-capture: press the info button on the back of the camera to cycle through viewing modes until you see an icon with a hand next to a camera; tap it until it says 'on'.



6 RAISE YOUR GLASS

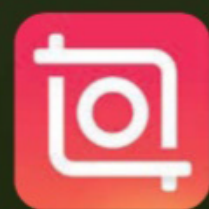
New to interchangeable lenses? A guide to building your RF prime lens collection could be handier than another camera tip, so here's our prescription for a sweet suite of Canon glass: first, a 50mm f/1.8 is a safe start. Next, get a 35mm f/1.8 for a wider angle with macro tricks. Reach further with an 85mm f/2 for portraits; and finally, a 16mm f/2.8 super-wide is ideal for vloggers.

THEN GET THESE...



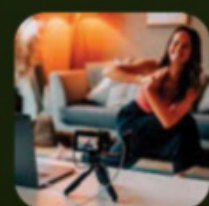
CANON CAMERA CONNECT

The R6 can pair wirelessly with this phone/iPad app. It's great for transferring photos – though it makes for a laggy live viewfinder. **£free / Android, iOS**



INSHOT PRO

Edit videos from your R6 on a mobile or tablet with InShot, an editing tool that comes pre-loaded with a ton of templates and transitions. **£8.49/yr / Android £11.49/yr / iOS**



CANON EOS WEBCAM UTILITY

Mac and Windows users can really up their Zoom game by downloading the EOS Webcam Utility and using their full-frame DSLR as a fancy cinematic webcam. **£free / canon.co.uk**

You OK, Hon?

Now divorced from Huawei, Honor has returned to flagship phones with full Google apps. Dan Grabham spends a fortnight seeing if its latest is ready to stand alone...

£950 / stuff.tv/Magic4Pro



DAY 01

I've long followed Honor phones and former parent company Huawei, so I was excited to try out the first flagship phone Honor has made since it was spun off. The key point is that Honor is not under onerous and rather boring trade restrictions (unlike Huawei), so the Magic4 Pro is widely available in the UK and comes packing a full selection of Google apps.

This phone is no groundbreaker on paper or in the flesh – most of the specs are pretty standard for

wide cut-out for the selfie-cam and face-unlock, so seeing the Magic4 Pro up close doesn't feel very 'new'. It's big in the hand, but not too weighty compared to some big-screen rivals at a shade over 200g.

Android 12 is top-layered with Honor's Magic UI 6, which bears more than a passing resemblance to Huawei's EMUI and as such feels – again – familiar. It's a more customised interface than we're getting on many flagships now, but fine in use.

The rear camera setup offers the wide/ultrawide combo that



The 100W wireless charging has to be seen to be believed – it's so fast! – but the charger is sold separately for £85

2022 flagships, with Qualcomm's Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 hardware and a sub-7in display that butts it up against the Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra in terms of size. The display is wonderfully bright, even if we've seen some that are slightly crisper, and a 120Hz variable refresh rate only adds to the experience.

While it's a fine-looking device with slim bezels, it unsurprisingly shares some design language with recent Huawei flagships, notably the Mate 40 Pro with its circular rear camera setup. That Huawei also has a similar

we've seen on many recent high-end phones, augmented by a 64MP telephoto plus a ToF depth sensor. The telephoto appears to be much better in theory than what you'll get on a rival like the OnePlus 10 Pro, for example.

There's no optical image stabilisation on the primary lens, which is odd (you only get that on the telephoto), and that's a disadvantage compared to other Android flagships such as the Google Pixel 6 Pro and Samsung Galaxy S22. The ultrawide has a 100° field of view.

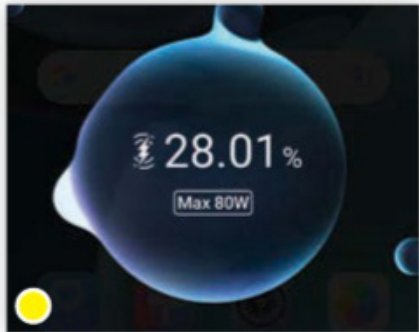
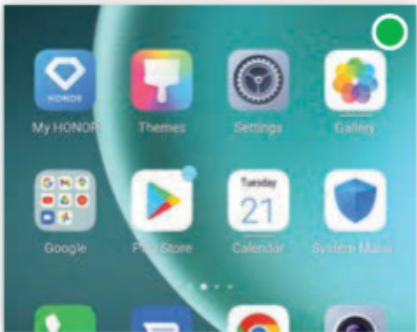


Our model was cyan in colour, but this phone is also widely available in a more low-key black finish.

HONOR

Donut of Truth™

01 You'll find nothing lacking in performance here
02 Great cameras, though only the zoom has OIS
03 Wireless charging is just phenomenally quick
04 Could perhaps do with a bigger battery
05 This is not exactly a groundbreaking design...
06 ...and it attracts fingerprints VERY easily



Tech specs

Screen 6.81in
2848x1312 120Hz
Processor
Snapdragon 8
Gen 1**RAM** 8GB
Storage 256GB
OS Android 12
with Magic UI 6.0
Cameras
50+50+64MP
rear, 12MP front
Battery 4600mAh
(USB-C, Qi)
Dimensions:
164x75x9.2mm,
215g

DAY 04

The main camera can take some terrific shots – I've brought the phone on holiday and enjoyed using it on the beach, in sunshine and in murky Cornish conditions alike. There's more noise and less detail in very low-light shots than I'd expected for a phone in this class, but it's more impressive at dealing with such scenes than the OnePlus 10 Pro.

The telephoto is great up to its 3.5x optical zoom, but beyond that the images get progressively less clear (especially beyond 10–20x), though it goes up to an incredible 100x. You'll need a really steady hand (or some kind of tripod) to shoot anything worthwhile at this kind of magnification, but we did get some OK shots of the far end of the beach and that's all you can realistically expect. Video capture (up to 4K at 60fps) is excellent.

Coincidentally, the beach is also where I rapidly found it was IP68 resistant to water and dust.

DAY 06

With this year's default flagship Android hardware – the mighty Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 – performance is not a problem. There's no lag whatsoever. Battery life is decent, though the 4600mAh capacity

isn't as good as some we're now seeing. It gets us through the entire day, though, and you'll probably have a little power left for the evening.

DAY 10

The 100W SuperCharge wireless charging has to be seen to be believed – it's so fast! There's one problem: you need a 100W SuperCharge wireless charger, which is sold separately for £85 (one arrived as part of our review gear). That's a fair whack for a charger; realistically you should save the cash and just plug it in, where it again charges at 100W and gives you 50% in 15 minutes. You're looking at a bit over half an hour to juice the Magic4 Pro to full, which is seriously impressive.

DAY 14

Overall, I'm a big fan of what Honor has done here – OK, so our cyan review model attracts fingerprints a lot and shares design elements with its former owner, and there are better camera options; but the hybrid optical/digital zoom works brilliantly, and I love the fast charging and the speedy phone experience. I'd probably dial down Magic UI a little bit, but these are really rather small issues.

STUFF SAYS

A stunning flagship at a great price point, though there are better camera phones
★★★★★



Sonic Origins

Over 30 years after the launch of the original game, does *Origins* – compiling and remastering all the early classics – provide as many hedgehog-based thrills as modern gamers can handle?

For many fans, Sonic's brightest days remain back in 16-bit form, when the spiky blue speedster dashed across 2D worlds collecting those precious rings – so it's about time *Sonic The Hedgehog* and its first follow-ups – 2, 3, *Knuckles* and *CD* – were brought together in a lovingly remastered collection.

The first thing that jumps out at you with *Sonic Origins* is just how beautifully presented it is, with brand-new animated sequences that provide the kind of narrative

context that used to be just tucked into the manuals, while selecting the games isn't through some dry menu list but via a kind of world map.

Although you can opt to play the games in their unadulterated form, Anniversary mode is the real draw. It presents everything in lush widescreen, addressing the criticism that things were often moving too fast to see that spike trap in front of you.

The aim of the game is still to collect rings, but they can now be

used to access artwork, music and videos in the game's Museum mode, replay particular stages, or unlock extra modes.

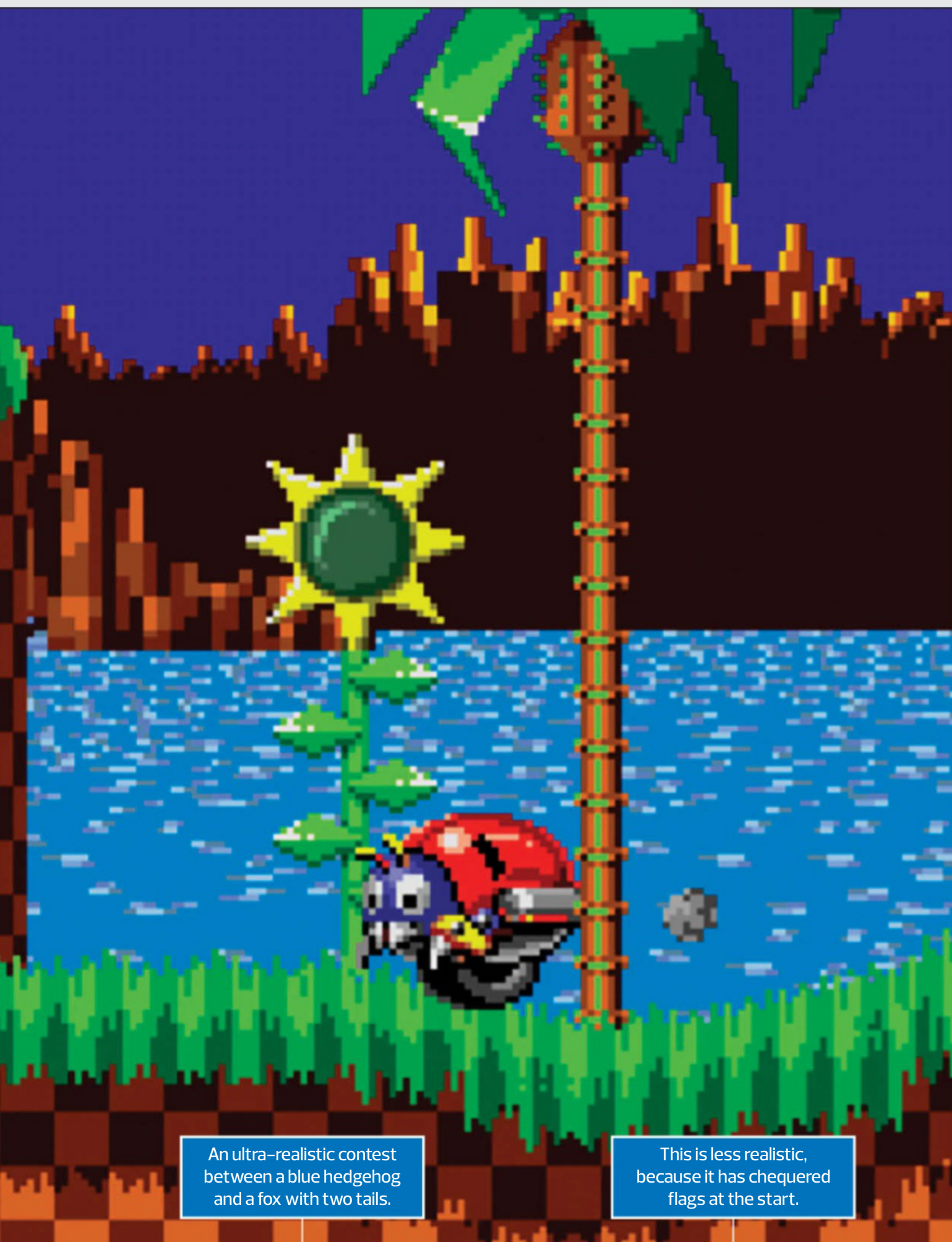
Debate will rage on over which game is the best, but the *Sonic 3 & Knuckles* combo (with its expansive level design) and *Sonic CD* (with its innovative time-travel mechanic) are probably the biggest attractions... although some will still favour *Sonic 2* as pure perfection. With three playable characters and a multitude of modes, there are plenty of ways

to keep playing and rediscovering a set of games that can typically be raced through in a few hours.

When *Origins* is supposed to be celebrating three decades of Sonic, it's a shame there are still some extras you need to fork out more money for – particularly as the difference in price between the standard game and the deluxe edition, which includes all the DLC, is just £4. But this is still very much the ultimate collection for fans old and new.

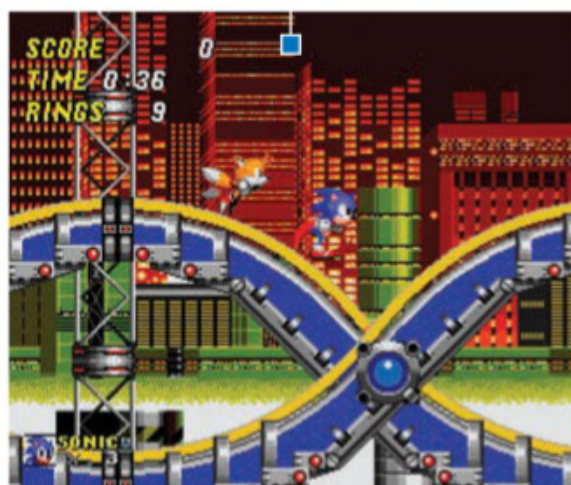
Alan Wen

STUFF SAYS As close to the definitive Sonic compilation as you could hope for ★★★★★☆



An ultra-realistic contest between a blue hedgehog and a fox with two tails.

This is less realistic, because it has chequered flags at the start.



Is it all Michael Jackson's fault?

Sonic 3 & Knuckles isn't just the largest game of the bunch; it's also been elusive for over a decade. The reason for this has never been officially explained, but Sonic fans have theorised that it's because some of the music in *Sonic 3* was produced by (albeit never officially credited to) Michael Jackson, with the rights to that music being trapped in legal limbo following his death.

If you thought the end of this long wait meant Sega had resolved the issue, that's sadly not the case. It means the Carnival Night, Ice Cap and Launch Base zones have new pieces of music, instead of what you might remember from the original Mega Drive game. That isn't to say the new music is bad, but it is different, and that does have an impact on the nostalgia.

One other minor musical niggle is that the songs that accompany the animated sequences bookending *Sonic CD* are from the US version of the game. Although you can at least listen to the other songs in the sound museum, it's a shame there's no option to change the in-game music based on your preferences, and it's frustrating there's not a better way to listen to your playlist of Sonic tunes outside of the Museum mode.



Mario Strikers: Battle League Football

Ever thought football would be better if they dispensed with all those silly old rules? Well, Nintendo has – and it's exactly as bonkers as it sounds...

Mario has always preferred sport to plumbing, but the beautiful game has been only a very occasional pastime. It's been 15 years since Nintendo's moustachioed mascot last took to the pitch – 2007's *Mario Strikers Charged* – and, like its predecessor, *Battle League Football* has very little respect for the traditional laws of the game.

Sure, it's still very much a team sport in which the aim is to score more goals than your opponent; but with no referee in sight, nobody bats an eyelid if Peach fires a well-aimed green shell at Wario before lining up a shot. And while it's very satisfying to see a player dribble directly into a banana-skin you've just dropped, the small pitches mean the screen can get seriously busy.

Each side has five players, one of them being a (maddeningly accomplished) goalkeeper, so you need to master the most effective variations of passing, shooting, 'dashing' and tackling if you're going to win anything. The fast pace means you're better off

trying to move the ball quickly to create some space rather than attempting any Maradona-esque solo runs; and while through-balls can be a bit fiddly, you'll get the hang of them with a bit of practice. Off-the-ball character-switching can also be hit and miss.

Every now and again a glowing orb will appear on the pitch, allowing the team that grabs it to perform a Hyper Strike in the opposition box. Time your button presses correctly and these superbly animated shots are unstoppable, earning you two goals for the price of one. Hyper Strikes appear just infrequently enough not to get annoying, and they can completely turn a match on its head, making for some brilliantly tense finales.

Battle League Football isn't particularly challenging and it's not exactly stuffed with modes either, particularly if you like to play alone – but its FUT-style Strikers Club should certainly keep you going in the build-up to the World Cup.

Matt Tate



Mario's good at taking the knee, thanks to years of dealing with under-sink blockages.



Haaland's a great player for sure, but will he really fit into City's way of playing?

STUFF SAYS It can get super-frenetic, but *Battle League Football* is easy to love ★★★★★☆

PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, PC / stuff.tv/SE5

Sniper Elite 5

The long-range shooter finally takes the fight to France... but does blowing Nazi brains out in slow-mo still get the pulse in that trigger finger racing?

Once you get really good, you'll be able to take someone out from as far away as 20cm.

Before joining the Army, he specialised in buying goods on eBay with very late bids.

The *Sniper Elite* series doesn't exactly hold many surprises; so after campaigns set in Berlin, Africa and Italy during World War II, this fifth outing sees seasoned protagonist Karl Fairburne finally teaming up with the French resistance.

Your mission is to put a stop to a top-secret Nazi plan called Operation Kraken – but the storytelling ultimately takes a back seat compared to what people really buy *Sniper Elite* games for: dishing out your ultra-violent brand of justice, one fascist at a time.

While the scenic countryside and stately chateaus of France are a beautiful sight to behold, with real attention to detail in each environment, the best way to admire *Sniper Elite 5* is through a rifle scope. The series' signature kill-cam follows your bullet speeding towards your target before it cuts to an X-ray for a bloody close-up of it piercing Nazi skulls, popping eyeballs, puncturing lungs and, most painfully, busting nuts... and

no, we don't mean 'nuts' in the sense of 'heads'.

Despite the title, sniping is far from your only choice of action. You can even opt for non-lethal takedowns for the first time, even if this rather diminishes the game's USP. The campaign's eight missions might not sound like much; but given how large each map is, with plenty of bonus objectives to discover as well as an optional assassination target, there's a staggering amount of choice in how you can approach your work, with skill upgrades you can tailor to your play-style.

The game also contains a raft of multiplayer options, our favourite being a new *Dark Souls*-esque invasion mode that allows you to gatecrash another player's campaign mission, transforming it into a tense and deadly game of cat and mouse.

SE5 is largely more of the same, and it feels like the WWII setting might have run its course... but a well-aimed shot from afar remains as bloody satisfying as it ever was.

Alan Wen

STUFF SAYS Top sniping with freedom to roam... but without adding much new ★★★★★



GET THE BEST GADGET DEALS WITH STUFF

TESTED ASUS ROG PHONE 6

The ROG prince

With its imperious power and some specialised accessories thrown in, can the latest chunky Asus set a new standard for gaming phones?

from £899 / [stuff.tv/rog6](#)

Smartphones are the handheld consoles of our time, but some are more committed to on-the-go gaming than others – and for the Asus ROG Phone 6 it's very much a top priority.

With a Snapdragon 8+ Gen 1 under the hood (the same chip found in Samsung's Galaxy S22 Ultra, and one that can hold its own against Apple's A13 Bionic and Intel's laptop CPUs) plus 16GB of RAM, 512GB of storage, and a sharp 6.78in screen that offers a higher-than-strictly-necessary 165Hz refresh rate, it has all the stuff we'd be looking for in a top phone, gaming or not.

So what makes the ROG Phone 6 particularly suited to mobile gaming? The additional USB-C port halfway up the left-hand side is a clue, because it comes with more accessories than any phone we've ever seen, including a dedicated clip-on controller and a fan to keep it cool when things get frantic. So can it make the most of all that power?

How cool and great!
The first thing that strikes you about the ROG Phone 6 is that it's big and heavy. It's tall rather than wide (1), which means you'll need two hands to operate it easily, or resort to using two. There's a one-handed option built into the software, but it's not great.

The game little feller
With powerful CPU and plenty of RAM, there's not much that'll slow the Asus down. Notoriously demanding games like XCOM: Enemy Within play just fine, edited video is a breeze and you can throw around browser windows and Google Docs without a hint of lag.

The gold snapper
Unsurprisingly, photography isn't the main focus here, but images from the main 50MP camera (2) are nicely balanced and the selfie camera can take some great shots too – though the ultra-wide lens is fairly limited. If you're hoping to shoot 24fps, it can also shoot 8K videos.

Snore fella
Linking the phone naked exposes the raft 'Game To Play' and 'For Those Who Dare' branding. You might want to get a cover.

Lumpy skinned skin
The ROG UI is a bit garish (3), while the Armoury Crate app – which includes both social media feeds and lighting controls – is a strange combo of useful and totally useless. The Game Gear overlay is much more helpful, putting the phone's full-power X-mode just a swipe away.

The golden juice
The battery will easily last a whole day or more if you stick to the standard stuff like WhatsApp and Twitter. Use the 165Hz refresh rate, switch on X-mode and attach the external cooler without plugging it in, however, and it'll only give you a few hours before sputtering out.

Tech specs
Screen: 6.78in 1080x2448 165Hz AMOLED
Processor: Snapdragon 8+ Gen 1 RAM: 12/16GB
Storage: 512GB OS: Android 12 Camera: 50+13MP
rear, 32MP front Battery: 6000mAh (USB-C, Qi)
Dimensions: 173x77x10.3mm, 239g

GOOD MEH EVIL
Can this thing's hefty...
The clip-on controller feels flimsy...
It's got loads of power...
...but it doesn't want to run Bully...
Limiting the refresh rate saves power...
The camera offers 'pro' controls

Stuff
Audio Headphones Philips L3
REVIEWS
Philips Fidelio L3 review
One way ticket to sound nirvana
★★★★★ Price: £299
Verity Burns
Follow @verityburns
7 September 2021 / 17:04 BST

Philips Fidelio X3 deals

Retailer	Price	Status	Deal Price	Action
ebay	£299	In Stock	£230.47	View offer
amazon prime	£299	In Stock	£266.99	View offer
amazon.co.uk	£299	In Stock	£266.99	View offer
go	£299	In Stock	£299.00	View offer

We check 1,000s of prices on 1,000s of retailers to get you the lowest new price we can find. Stuff may get a commission from these offers. Read more [here](#).

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We pick out the best price for every featured product

Online
Choose from our roster of great-value retailers

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Stuff

TOP TEN

OF EVERYTHING

Straight
outta testing
and into our
rankings.

NEW

**HOT
BUY**

A product of
techy genius
that's set our
hearts aflame.

**BARGAIN
BUY**

A proper steal.
Worth owning
regardless of
cashflow.

UPDATE

Time changes
everything,
including *Stuff*
Top Ten entries.



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1

HOT
BUY

Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra

from £1149 / stuff.tv/S22Ultra

If you're a tech-loving Android fan and can justify the outlay, this is the most fully-featured phone of the 2022 crop. The first 'S' model to have a built-in S Pen, it also offers a wonderfully sharp 6.8in QHD+ screen with super-smooth 120Hz scrolling and a stellar zoom camera, aided by a new neural processing unit that creates Samsung's best pictures yet.

Stuff says ★★★★★

This is the most capable smartphone you can currently buy



● NOW ADD THIS

Samsung Smart View Flip Cover

This clever case reveals a small portion of your display so you can do basic stuff without opening it. £25 / samsung.com

● TIPS & TRICKS

- Swipe up from the bottom of the screen for the app tray, so you can browse all of your apps.
- Press volume and standby together to take a screenshot, or just swipe your hand across the screen.
- Go to Settings > Battery to finely control your phone's battery-saving efficiency.



● Prices quoted are for handset only unless otherwise stated

2



Google Pixel 6 Pro

from £699 / stuff.tv/Pixel6Pro

With smart shooting modes adding flexibility and a trio of lenses delivering delightfully detailed images, this Pixel is trading blows with the best. It has one or two weak spots, but Android 12's slick user experience mostly makes up for them.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Ambitious and uncompromising, this is Google's finest smartphone by far

3



Apple iPhone 13 Pro

from £949 / stuff.tv/13Pro

While the iPhone 13 Pro doesn't look dissimilar to 2020's offering, it comes with a bunch of tweaks that add up to something more significant. This is Apple's most accomplished handset of the 13 generation, with the A15 Bionic chip, 5G and an ace camera system.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Hits the spot for power, performance, camera, battery life and design

4



OnePlus 10 Pro

★★★★★ from £799 / stuff.tv/OnePlus10Pro

OnePlus has done it again, with a powerful top-end phone that takes on the Google Pixel 6 Pro.

NEW

5



Oppo Find X5 Pro

★★★★★ £1049 / stuff.tv/X5Pro

An absolute stunner of a smartphone, only let down by limited zooming specs.

6



Google Pixel 6

★★★★★ £499 / stuff.tv/Pixel6

Misses the 6 Pro's zoom lens, but this remains an upper-mid-range Android phone to be cherished.

NEW

7



OnePlus Nord 2T

★★★★★ from £369 / stuff.tv/Nord2T

Competitive on price and features, and with super-duper charging speeds.

8



Samsung Galaxy S21 FE

★★★★☆ from £599 / stuff.tv/S21FE

A step below Samsung's flagship S22 series, but significantly kinder to your wallet.

9



Apple iPhone 13 Mini

★★★★☆ from £679 / stuff.tv/13Mini

The current entry-level iPhone is essentially the same phone as the standard 13 but a bit smaller.

10



Asus ROG Phone 5s Pro

★★★★☆ from £1100 / stuff.tv/5sPro

With its overclocked processor, this is an evolution of the ROG Phone 5 that roars while others whimper.

1

HOT
BUY

Sony WF-1000XM4

£199 / stuff.tv/WFXM4

A worthy successor to the XM3 buds that sat atop this list for what seemed like decades, Sony's latest true wireless noise-cancelling in-ears are smaller, smarter and better. With the arguable exceptions of call quality and app slickness, the WF-1000XM4s aren't quite the best at anything; but they're so close to being the best at everything that their all-round game is untouchable. No other wireless earbuds are so consistently accomplished across the board.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The finest true wireless noise-cancelling earbuds around – this is the complete package

2



Beats Fit Pro

£200 / stuff.tv/FitPro

These Beats are excellent on many levels. Unless you really love the earhook design of the Powerbeats Pro, they're definitely the best workout 'phones in the Apple/Beats range and rival any others at the price.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Good battery life, punchy sound, lock-tight fit

NEW

3



Bang & Olufsen Beoplay EX

£349 / stuff.tv/EX

Confidence and clarity are the name of the game here. The EXs have a keenness that makes everything you listen to as exciting as the first time you heard it. ANC adds some versatility, at the expense of sound quality.

Stuff says ★★★★★

High-class wireless in-ears with Danish flair

4



Marshall Motif ANC

★★★★★ £169 / stuff.tv/Motif

Seriously impressive buds with fine sound, a decent fit and sturdy build.

NEW

5



Sennheiser Momentum True Wireless 3

★★★★★ £220 / stuff.tv/TW3

Balanced and accurate – prepare to extend your shortlist of premium in-ear headphones.

1

HOT
BUY

NEW



Sony WH-1000XM5

£379 / stuff.tv/WHXM5

Nobody was able to displace Sony's WH-1000XM4 headphones from the top of this list for two years... yet the 2022 model manages to be even better. Key to the XM5s' overall quality is the new carbon-fibre composite 30mm drivers: they bring even greater clarity than the previous generation, and the sound reproduction is beautifully precise. The simple fact is that these are the best noise-cancellers around by almost every measure. You really won't regret buying them.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Sony keeps its grip on the top spot with an unrivalled combo of great sound, ANC and comfort

2



Bowers & Wilkins PX7

£249 / stuff.tv/PX7

B&W's second ANC headphones place greater emphasis on comfort and are all the better for it, while the noise-killing is as effective as you'll find anywhere. Oh, and they sound flipping good too.

Stuff says ★★★★★

B&W takes on the best with top-class cans

3



Bose NCH 700

£280 / stuff.tv/NCH700

There are superior-sounding headphones, but if call quality and noise-cancelling are just as important to you then Bose's flagship cans are the gold standard. The voice-pickup system is the best out there.

Stuff says ★★★★★

As all-rounders, these are hard to beat

4



Philips Fidelio L3

★★★★★ £199 / stuff.tv/L3

For those who value balance and tonal accuracy, the L3s are easy to recommend.

5



Technics EAH-A800

★★★★★ £296 / stuff.tv/A800

These premium-priced ANC headphones get almost everything right.



Apple Watch Series 7

from £369 / stuff.tv/WatchS7

If you've got an Apple Watch Series 3 or even earlier, upgrading to this one will be like walking into a lighting shop from a dark and foggy winter evening: the display is bigger and clearer, and there are new input options too. As a wearable it can't be beaten simply because it does so much, especially if you're into fitness; just bear in mind that it's probably not worth upgrading from a Series 5 or 6 – and of course, its usefulness remains totally dependent on you having an iPhone.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The mighty Apple Watch cements its place at the top of the wearable tree



Hammerhead Karoo 2

£359 / stuff.tv/Karoo2

For ages cycling computers have been held back by outdated tech... but Hammerhead's sharp screen really is a gamechanger, and effectively running a tiny Android phone inside a custom case feels like a no-brainer. The 3.2in display is a delight, helping you spot new trails branching off from routes, all with the nostalgic feel of an early smartphone. Navigating with swipes and taps is intuitive (and works with gloves), and the software is constantly updated with helpful nips and tucks.

Stuff says ★★★★★

At last, a bike computer for the 21st century – Wahoo and Garmin appear to have missed a trick here

2



Garmin Fenix 7

from £600 / stuff.tv/Fenix7

If your budget stretches, the impressive mix of rugged durability, serious battery endurance, excellent navigation skills and smartwatch features make this the best all-round sports watch you can buy.

Stuff says ★★★★★

An ace tool for adventurous fitness-building

3



Samsung Galaxy Watch4 Classic

from £349 / stuff.tv/Watch4

This is the best Wear OS watch in years: a greatest hits of Samsung watch design and Google watch software. Go for the larger 46mm version, though, as the wee one just doesn't last long enough between charges.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

A top smartwatch that needs a lot of charging

4



Apple Watch SE

★★★★☆ from £229 / stuff.tv/WatchSE

The most obvious alternative to the Watch Series 7 – and it looks almost as good.

5



Huawei Watch GT 3

★★★★☆ from £210 / stuff.tv/WatchGT3

A nippy interface with great health tracking and stellar battery life.

2



Wattbike Atom

£1999 / stuff.tv/WBAAtom

This is no beginner bike, but if you're looking to improve your cycling form at home you're in for a treat. Pedalling feels eerily real, and the improvements over the first-gen Atom are significant.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The benchmark for serious indoor cyclists

3



Fitbit Charge 5

£119 / stuff.tv/Charge5

The Charge 5 gets a colour touchscreen (something the Charge 4 lacked) and goes beyond basic tracking with clever features centred on health and stress. It's just a pity many are locked behind the Premium service.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

A solid tracker with smart optional extras

4



Huawei Watch GT Runner

★★★★☆ £180 / stuff.tv/GTRunner

Has the looks and smarts to be a more than capable jogging buddy.

5



Philips Bone Conduction Headphones

★★★★☆ £87 / stuff.tv/PhilipsBone

A satisfying way to fill your ears with sound, without actually filling your ears.

1

HOT
BUY

UPDATE

TIPS & TRICKS

The Sidecar feature on macOS Big Sur lets you use an iPad as a second display for your MacBook.

Apple charges a hefty premium for extra storage, so consider a cheaper external SSD.



Apple MacBook Air (M1)

from £949 / stuff.tv/Air

Apple's amazing M1 processor means that, for once, we aren't hankering after a MacBook Pro for video editing and graphics-heavy gaming. It's a pity about the rubbish webcam, but this is a stunning machine in every other respect, and the best all-round work laptop you can get for under a grand. Watch out for our upcoming review of the even more powerful M2 model...

Stuff says ★★★★★

Our go-to MacBook just keeps getting even go-to-er



● NOW ADD THIS

Anker PowerExpand 7-in-2 Hub

Turn the Air's twin USB-C ports into a media hub with a mix of HDMI, USB, microSD and SD card connections. £40 / uk.anker.com

2



Apple MacBook Pro 14in

from £1899 / stuff.tv/Pro14

If you don't need this MacBook's power and ports, going Pro really is overkill. That's especially true if your software isn't yet optimised for Apple's incredible new M1Pro chip: it'll just mean you're spending too much for what you'll get out of it. For the vast majority of us, the MacBook Air above offers more than enough grunt and flexibility... if, however, you're working in a field that can take advantage of its tech, this is the high-powered laptop you've been waiting for.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The Pro goes fully 'Pro' again – if you can afford it, you'll love it

3



Microsoft Surface Laptop 3

from £869 / stuff.tv/SurfaceLap3

The Surface Laptop 3 seems plain on paper – no second screen, no hybrid hinge, no fingerprint scanner – but Microsoft has put supreme attention to detail into every bit that matters: the keyboard is wonderful, for example. It also finally gets a USB-C port, even if charging remains resolutely dependent on the fragile Surface Connect cord. If you can spare a few quid more, the Surface Laptop 4 gives you more up-to-date internals, but you don't get the bang for buck on offer here.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Forget frills and gimmicks: this is everything a laptop should be

UPDATE

4



Apple MacBook Pro 13in (2020)

★★★★★ from £1149 / stuff.tv/Pro13

The new model has Apple's latest M2 chip, but the 'basic' M1 version still kicks big, big bottom.

5

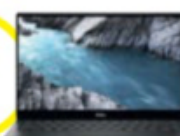


LG Gram 16

★★★★★ from £799 / stuff.tv/Gram16

LG's latest light weight machine is slick, light and well made – an impressive, versatile option.

6



Dell XPS 13

★★★★★ from £999 / stuff.tv/XPS13

Style, portability, performance... there's little else out there that's quite so well rounded.

7



Razer Blade 15 Advanced

★★★★★ from £2400 / stuff.tv/15Adv

Brilliant design meets searing pace in a top-tier esports experience.

8



Alienware x15

★★★★★ from £1803 / stuff.tv/x15

Alienware's 15.6in gaming laptop certainly isn't cheap, but it is brilliant.

9



Huawei MateBook X Pro

★★★★★ from £1600 / stuff.tv/XPro

This is a real powerhouse of a Windows laptop. See also the equally slick MateBook 14s.

10



Microsoft Surface Laptop Studio

★★★★☆ from £1449 / stuff.tv/SLStudio

The king of the hinge raises its game again, with an excellent screen and a haptic touchpad.

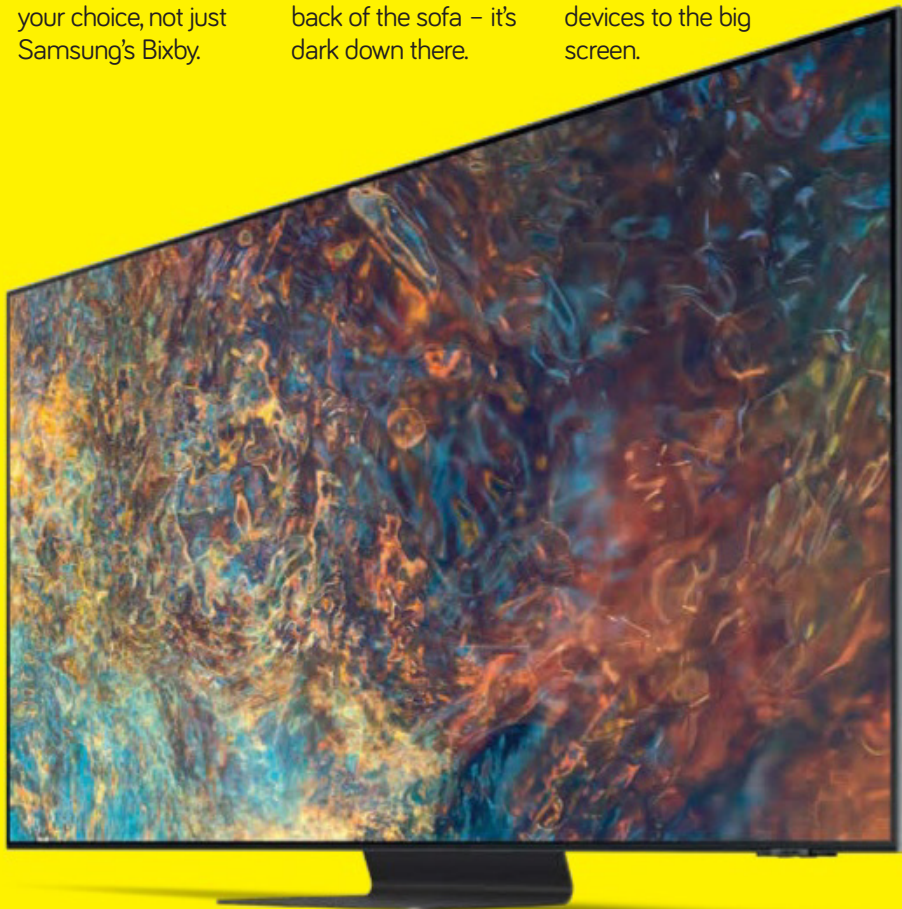
1

HOT
BUY**TIPS & TRICKS**

You can configure this TV to work with the voice assistant of your choice, not just Samsung's Bixby.

Samsung's remote is solar-powered, so don't lose it down the back of the sofa – it's dark down there.

AirPlay 2 integration lets you stream content from Apple devices to the big screen.



Samsung QE65QN95A

£1299 / stuff.tv/QN95A

This is Samsung's single most expensive current 4K telly (unless you buy a bigger version), but the pictures justify the outlay. The Korean giant's implementation of the new Mini LED tech is, on this evidence, something to be reckoned with. It's difficult to imagine how any of the new sets that are still to come this year could be better.

Stuff says ★★★★★

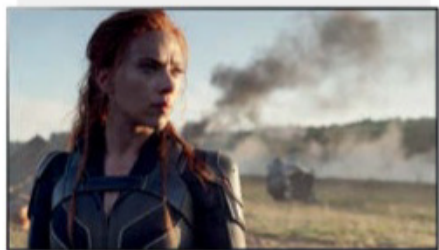
This Mini LED television is a fearsomely accomplished set – and the one to beat

● **NOW ADD THIS**

Samsung Q-Series soundbars

Pairing your QLED with one of these is a stress-free way to get 3D object-based sound. from £399 / samsung.com

2



LG OLED65G1

£2199 / stuff.tv/65G1

Well over £2k is a lot of money for a television, even one as slim and well-specified as this, especially when you take the humdrum audio into account – not to mention the absence of a stand. But the OLED specialists have made good on the 'Evo' promise by serving up pictures that exceed expectations... so maybe LG is entitled to charge what it thinks it can get away with. The G1 really is a top-class set – between this and the Samsung at No1, there's really nothing in it.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Probably LG's best ever OLED... which is saying something

3



Philips 48OLED935

£1099 / stuff.tv/OLED935

Over a grand for a 48in TV is no one's idea of a bargain. But when you consider the level of audio-visual fidelity this money buys, not to mention the convenience of the integrated soundbar, it's hard to argue the 48OLED935 isn't worth every penny. Next-gen console owners may lament the lack of HDMI 2.1 (note that the newer OLED936 model at No5 on this list has two HDMI 2.1 ports), but for the rest of us the lovely picture is quite immersive enough.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Expensive for its size, but the picture and sound justify the price

4



LG OLED55CX

★★★★★ £899 / stuff.tv/OLED55CX

LG knows exactly what it's doing with OLED and the results here are mighty impressive.

5



Philips 55OLED936

★★★★★ £2499 / stuff.tv/OLED936

Right now there is no more satisfying way to drop this amount of cash on a new TV.

6



Panasonic TX-55JZ1000

★★★★★ £1100 / stuff.tv/JZ1000

Has the specs, the interface and the picture quality to compete... shame it's so chunky.

7



Sony XR-55A90J

★★★★★ £1999 / stuff.tv/A90J

Does everything to a dizzily high standard – but the world is awash with cheaper rivals.

8



Samsung 50AU9000

★★★★★ £399 / stuff.tv/AU9000

As much TV as most people will ever need, at a reasonable price.

9



Sony KE-48A9

★★★★★ £1049 / stuff.tv/A9

Don't be fooled by its relatively small size: the A9 is a real smasher of a 4K OLED.

10

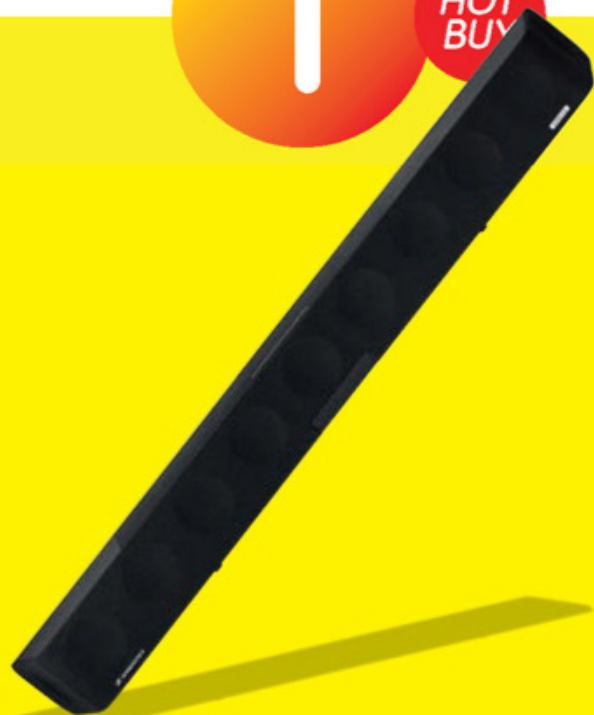


Hisense A7200G

★★★★★ £275 / stuff.tv/A7200G

This 50in budget buy is a perfectly good way to get a bigish screen at a little price.

1

HOT
BUY

Sennheiser Ambeo Soundbar

£1999 / stuff.tv/AmbeoSoundbar

Utterly convincing Dolby Atmos and DTS:X 3D sound, ample power and lots of inputs mean no other soundbar currently available can perform feats with the solidity and confidence of this Sennheiser. The sheer room-filling scale of this device's sound is remarkable, and it's hard to think of any content that wouldn't benefit from being Ambeo'd. That's why, as well as being the biggest and the most expensive, it's the best you can buy.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The Ambeo Soundbar is a big unit but the sound it makes is bigger still

2



Sonos Arc

£899 / stuff.tv/SonosArc

Don't expect this soundbar to do everything a multi-speaker Dolby Atmos setup can do, but its up-firing and side-firing drivers give a real sense of cinematic scale. See also the affordable new Ray model.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Big-screen sound for your big-screen binges

3



Roku Streambar

£100 / stuff.tv/Streambar

It's a compact soundbar and a versatile streaming stick in the same box – and both parts of the deal work brilliantly well. This is the simplest and cheapest way to upgrade your TV's sound and smarts in one go.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A punchy little bar with built-in streaming skills

4



Sonos Beam (Gen 2)

★★★★★ £449 / stuff.tv/SonosBeam

The addition of Dolby Atmos has made an excellent compact soundbar even better.

5



Denon Home 550

★★★★★ £399 / stuff.tv/Home550

For a small soundbar, this Denon delivers a big sound with loads of detail.

1

HOT
BUY

Sky TV

from £26/m + setup / stuff.tv/SkyTV

Already home to the biggest selection of 4K content, from blockbuster films and original dramas to top-flight sport, Sky has adopted a can't-beat-'em-join-'em approach to streaming by incorporating the likes of Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ and BT Sport in its user-friendly interface. It's also restructured its packages to make them more affordable, while multiroom and mobile options round off the most comprehensive content system money can buy.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Sky has come out fighting to move with the times and its selection of shows is unrivalled

2



Amazon Fire TV Cube

£110 / stuff.tv/FireTVCube

The Fire TV interface is easy to use and all the big catch-up services are available via this tidy box – and best of all, Alexa voice control works brilliantly. You'll never have to worry about losing the remote again!

Stuff says ★★★★★

A marvel of voice control for your telly

3



Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K

£50 / stuff.tv/FireStick4K

This streaming stick offers 4K plus a faster processor than the original Fire TV Stick, and comes with an Alexa remote... but see also the Max model below, and the cheaper non-4K version.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Simply a great 4K streaming stick

4



Roku Express 4K

★★★★★ £30 / stuff.tv/Express4K

Has the user-friendly Roku OS and offers all the streaming services you'd expect.

5

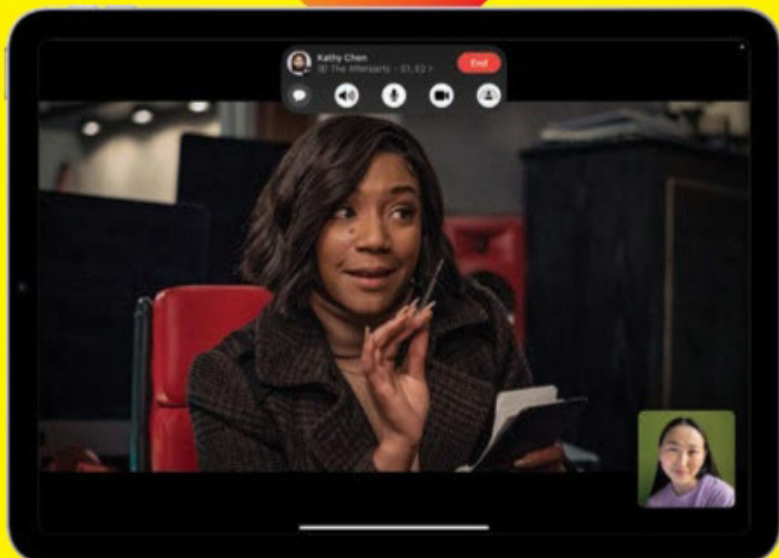


Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K Max

★★★★☆ £55 / stuff.tv/Fire4KMax

The 'Max' part means faster insides, Wi-Fi 6 support and a remote with more buttons.

1

HOT
BUY

Apple iPad Air (2022)

from £569 / stuff.tv/iPadAir2022

This tablet has enough power to rival the flagship iPad Pro – and even quite a few current MacBooks. And though you might need to add a keyboard, a stylus and even a gamepad to make the most of it, the 2022 Air reinforces the growing sense that an iPad really can be a laptop replacement for doing proper work (or play). Slight storage dilemmas aside, this is a top-notch device, supported by an ecosystem that makes it highly versatile for an increasingly wide range of users.

Stuff says ★★★★★

It's not perfect, but this latest iPad Air is a top-quality package – not least because of that M1 chip

2



Apple iPad Pro

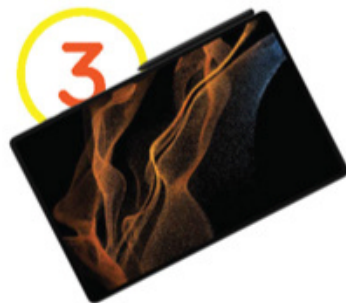
from £749 / stuff.tv/iPadPro

The iPad Pro's display is wonderful and the M1 chip super-powerful, with only Apple itself holding things back with the flawed iPadOS. Don't rush to upgrade if you have the 2020 model... but this is the king of tablets.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Absolutely the best tablet around... at a price

3



Samsung Galaxy Tab S8 Ultra

from £849 / stuff.tv/S8Ultra

Its sheer size might make it a bit niche, but this Galaxy Tab is perfect for watching films, playing games, reading text and taking notes with the bundled S Pen. Add DeX, and this is the best Android tab money can buy.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Samsung has made the ultimate Android tablet

4



Apple iPad

★★★★★ from £319 / stuff.tv/iPad

The ninth generation of Apple's entry-level tablet is a highly capable productivity tool.

NEW

5



Xiaomi Pad 5

★★★★★ from £329 / stuff.tv/Pad5

Xiaomi's do-it-all Android tab is a proper all-round bargain.

1

HOT
BUY

Sony PlayStation 5

£450 / stuff.tv/PS5

The PS5 is not a modest upgrade. Its hulking design means it'll make a bad first impression on some, but spend time playing it and it'll soon win you over – and then some. This is essentially a high-spec gaming PC for the living room: stupendously powerful, with greatly reduced loading times compared to the PS4. Most last-gen titles will run fine, many with a boost, and the line-up of new games is strong; we just hope developers make use of that fascinating DualSense pad and its haptic feedback trickery.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Huge power, clever hardware and a guarantee of great games to come make the PS5 hard to resist

2



Nintendo Switch OLED

£310 / stuff.tv/SwitchOLED

While it's identical to the standard Switch in terms of raw power, the OLED model does move things on with its bigger, better display. If you're looking to buy a Switch for the first time, this one is well worth the extra cash.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

A tempting upgrade from the trusty old Switch

3



Microsoft Xbox Series X

£450 / stuff.tv/XSX

A fully future-proofed machine that doesn't scrimp on specs or speed, the Series X just wants more exclusive titles to make it sing. Xbox Game Pass remains pretty much the best streamed offering in gaming.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

A beast of a console that needs more games

4



Valve Steam Deck

★★★★★ from £349 / stuff.tv/SteamDeck

Battery life is a worry, but this do-anything device could revolutionise PC gaming.

5



Microsoft Xbox Series S

★★★★★ £250 / stuff.tv/XSS

Delivers affordability without sacrificing key features, but still falls short on new titles.

1

HOT
BUY

Elden Ring

from £40 / PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, PC

With FromSoftware's trademark difficulty and a richly imaginative world that doesn't hold your hand, this ambitious action RPG is a crowning achievement. There's so much to lose yourself in here: lore hunters will have a field day combing through the world's mythology; speedrunners and those who thrive on challenge will relish figuring out the best weapons to use and where to find them. Even for most of us mere mortals, *Elden Ring* is an event: an invitation to greatness.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Majestic and daunting, this is like no other open-world action RPG

● OR PLAY THIS

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

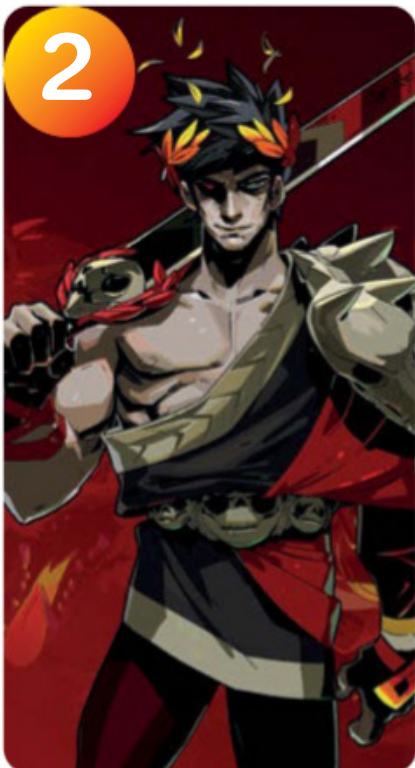
This adventure-filled open-world masterpiece might be five years old now, but it's still brilliant.

£45 / Switch

TIPS & TRICKS

- Sprinting doesn't consume stamina... until you get close to an enemy, when it suddenly does!
- Weapons are key: you need to improve them whenever you can. A good melee weapon is a must.
- A hub called the Roundtable Hold enables you to visit characters who can offer gear upgrades.

2



Hades

from £17 / all platforms

Just when you think you've seen all this hellish roguelite has to offer, a new tweak yanks you out of your comfort zone. It quickly becomes very addictive... and even if you'll have to face numerous setbacks, few games make you feel so goodly.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Great even if you don't like roguelites ...and if you do, it's the best there is

3



Deathloop

from £20 / PS5, PC

With meaty combat, organic exploration and lots of ingenious puzzles, this is a wondrously accessible adventure that's easy to pick up but impossible to stop playing. It's flawless in pretty much every way, from its design style to its soundtrack.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Not just one of the best games of 2021, but one of the best games ever

4



Halo Infinite

★★★★★ from £26 / XSX, XB1, PC

The best *Halo* since the original trilogy – and it's included with Game Pass.

5



Forza Horizon 5

★★★★★ from £35 / XSX, XB1, PC

This stunning fifth venture into the *Horizon* is the pinnacle of open-world racing.

6



It Takes Two

★★★★★ from £17 / PS5, PS4, XSX, XB1, PC

A masterful co-op experience that will live long in the memory.

7



Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart

★★★★★ £35 / PS5

Consistently fun and incredible to look at, this is a PS5 must-have.

8



Metroid Dread

★★★★★ £39 / Switch

Samus Aran's latest adventure is the perfect showcase game for the Switch OLED.

9



Psychonauts 2

★★★★★ from £40 / XSX, XB1, PS4, PC

A story that brims with imagination while also addressing very real issues.

10



Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga

★★★★★ from £33 / all platforms

The best Lego game yet and a fine tribute to the *Star Wars* world.

1

HOT
BUY**TIPS & TRICKS**

You can control your Move with the touch controls on top, the Sonos app, Google Assistant or Alexa.

Auto Trueplay adapts the Move's sound to different rooms, while the app offers additional EQ tweaks.

**Sonos Move**£399 / stuff.tv/SonosMove

The Sonos range of wireless speakers had been crying out for a battery-powered portable model for ages – and finally our favourite multiroom audio specialist caved in. Luckily, the Move was worth the wait. Its adaptability and sound quality mean it's fine value for money, and a no-brainer for anyone who's already a fan of the brand. This is the speaker Sonos should have launched years ago – and for even better portability, see the Roam model at No4 on this list.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Sonos finally gets up to speed with the portable speaker craze, and in style

**● NOW ADD THIS****YouTube Music Premium**

If you'd like a side of optional visuals with your audio, look no further than the ad-free tier of YouTube Music. £9.99/month / music.youtube.com

2

**Sonos One**£199 / stuff.tv/SonosOne

The Sonos One is now a more well-rounded device than it was at launch, supporting Spotify with Alexa or Google Assistant voice control as well as Amazon Music and TuneIn Radio, while the early Alexa hiccups seem to have been fixed. Sound quality is a cut above pretty much anything else at this price point with the exception of Amazon's Echo Studio, but that speaker can't beat this one's lovely design and ease of setup. Plus it won't force you to commit to one ecosystem 'til death do you part...

Stuff says ★★★★★

A great balance of sound and smarts for forward-thinking audio nerds

3

**Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin**£699 / stuff.tv/Zeppelin

No, the latest Zeppelin doesn't quite give the widely separated stereo sound it reckons it can. And no, that downward-facing 'ambient' light doesn't serve much of a purpose, while the absence of an HDMI input is perplexing. But in every other respect this is a deeply impressive wireless speaker. There's no clever DSP magic, just excellent sound with a stack of music-making talent and a control app that helps rather than hinders. It's basically the complete package.

Stuff says ★★★★★

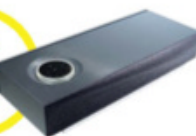
Supremely enjoyable hi-fi sound in a supremely large package

4

**Sonos Roam**★★★★★ £179 / stuff.tv/SonosRoam

There are better-sounding sub-£200 speakers, but none with the Roam's portable skills.

5

**Naim Mu-so 2nd Generation**★★★★★ £1449 / stuff.tv/Mu-so2

More than capable of maintaining Naim's position at the front of the luxury hi-fi pack.

6

**Audio Pro Addon C10 MkII**★★★★★ £329 / stuff.tv/C10Mk2

Ideal for multiroom systems – there's nothing else that sounds this good at this price.

7

**Devialet Phantom 1 108dB**★★★★★ £2790 each / stuff.tv/Phantom1

An insanely powerful lump of hi-fi magic, best enjoyed in a neighbour-terrifying stereo pair.

8

**JBL Charge 5**★★★★★ £139 / stuff.tv/JBLCharge5

A no-nonsense portable speaker for audio fans who won't settle for a sonic lightweight.

9

**Q Acoustics M20**★★★★★ £379 (pair) / stuff.tv/QM20

Hi-res sound from multiple sources, with none of the compromises the price suggests.

10

**Bowers & Wilkins Formation Wedge**★★★★★ £899 / stuff.tv/BWWedge

Pricy, weird-looking... and a brilliant illustration of what a wireless speaker is capable of.

1

HOT
BUY


VanMoof S3

£2148 / stuff.tv/VanMoofS3

VanMoof's second-gen S3 (or X3 if you're under 5ft 8in) looks like a normal bike, rides like a normal bike and, crucially, doesn't cost a ridiculous amount of cash. The chunky 50mm tyres, slightly swooped bars and upright riding position all combine to make it super-comfy, and 30 miles with the power assistance set to level three (out of four) left us completely sweat-free with 20% still in the tank. Plus, for such a looker, the S3 has a lot of discreet smarts to deter thieves. See also the ultra-techy new S5.

Stuff says ★★★★★

This smart-looking e-bike offers a great ride, great features and some genuinely useful security smarts

2



Cowboy 4

£2490 / stuff.tv/Cowboy4

The Belgian maker's latest model has 50% more torque than its predecessor, but the slinky profile and simple interface with GPS remain... and there's also an equally excellent step-through version, the 4 ST.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Smoothly integrated e-power at a good price

3



LeMond Prolog

£4350 / stuff.tv/Prolog

From multiple Tour de France winner and world road race champion Greg LeMond, the Prolog is an all-carbon commute-crushing machine that doesn't really look like it has a motor or a battery at all.

Stuff says ★★★★★

If you want gears and lightness, it's worth it

4



Ribble Endurance SL e Pro

★★★★★ from £5199 / stuff.tv/Endurance

Super-light and a great bike on its own – the motor is just the icing on the hilly cake.

5



Gocycle G4i

★★★★★ £4999 / stuff.tv/G4i

This folding e-bike is silky-smooth, super-fast and splendidly futuristic... for a price.

1

HOT
BUY


Porsche Taycan

from £74,000 / stuff.tv/Taycan

It was about time someone took the fight to Tesla, and boy has Porsche delivered with the Taycan. This electric four-door saloon is the EV that petrolheads have been waiting for. In full-fat Turbo S flavour, the Taycan hits 62mph in 2.8 seconds – and adding more drama to proceedings is how it shifts up through its two-speed gearbox. The Taycan has a dynamism that can't be matched by other electric cars, with a surefootedness that encourages you to press on.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Big power, sports-car handling and lots of clever tech make the Taycan the most exciting EV yet

2



Audi Q4 E-tron

from £43,865 / stuff.tv/Q4Etron

Audi's premium electric SUV has decent range and is surprisingly well priced. The smart tech works great, but this is also a highly practical car and will make sense for a lot of families and compulsive boot-fillers.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The best all-round electric SUV we've driven

3



Polestar 2

from £41,900 / stuff.tv/Polestar2

From Volvo's EV subsidiary, this five-door saloon is perky and fun to throw around corners. It also feels just that wee bit better put-together than the Tesla Model 3, plus the Scandi looks are nicer.

Stuff says ★★★★★

This all-electric fastback is a joy to drive

4



Hyundai Ioniq 5

★★★★★ from £37,600 / stuff.tv/Ioniq5

A deceptively large electric saloon that's bristling with slick tech.

5



Volkswagen ID.4

★★★★★ from £36,550 / stuff.tv/ID4

A step up from the smaller ID.3, and a great crossover option for families.

● Electric car prices include government plug-in car grant (PICG)

1

HOT
BUYAmazon Echo
(4th Gen)£90 / stuff.tv/Echo

Having morphed from a cylinder to a sphere, the latest Echo is an excellent newsreader, weather forecaster, personal assistant and intercom straight out of the box; but it's now also a capable speaker and a very accessible smart home hub. It doesn't sound as good as the Sonos One for listening to music, but it's significantly smarter and considerably cheaper too.

Stuff says ★★★★★

An all-round upgrade that makes the Echo a smarter speaker than ever



● NOW ADD THIS

Honeywell T6R

This Zigbee-enabled thermostat is wireless so you can place it where it's most convenient.

£200 / amazon.co.uk

● TIPS & TRICKS

- The Echo's built-in Zigbee hub can hook up hundreds of smart home devices without a bridge.
- Pair a compatible thermostat and the Echo's temperature sensor can activate the heating.
- Alexa Flash Briefings deliver bursts of news or trivia; choose from 5000 sources in the app.

2



Amazon Echo Dot (4th Gen)

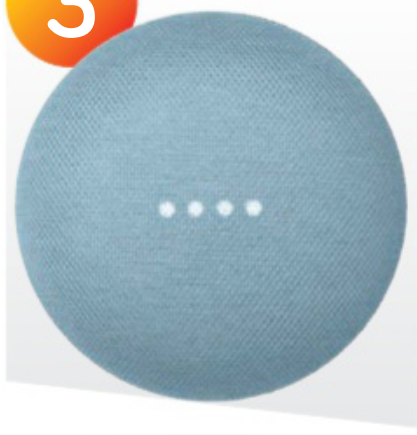
from £50 / stuff.tv/Dot

It can't match a full-size smart speaker for audio and is clearly not as good as its big brother above; but as a radio and Alexa assistant for the bedside or kitchen, this cutie gets the job done. It's way better than its predecessor Dots, which always had fairly weak speakers – this latest model is capable of everything you can implore Alexa to throw at it. It's worth paying £10 more for the 'with Clock' version, which adds some basic visual cues beyond telling the time.

Stuff says ★★★★★

With the optional clock, this is our favourite bedside wondergadget

3



Google Nest Mini

£49 / stuff.tv/NestMini

If you live in Google's world (and let's face it, most of us do) then the Nest Mini is the best, cheapest way to get into the smart home game. Just like the latest Echo Dot, this latest version features upgraded speakers and mics compared to older models. It's a slightly better bet than the Echo Dot with Clock if you want close integration with your Google calendar and apps. The only reason not to buy is if you want more powerful audio – for that, get the Google Nest Audio instead.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Louder and cleverer than ever... and it'll only improve with updates

4



Ring Indoor Cam

★★★★★ £50 / stuff.tv/RingIndoor

This cute little spy-cam is a bona fide bargain for anyone with security worries.

5



Nest Learning Thermostat

★★★★★ £199 / stuff.tv/NestTherm

A simple and mess-free smart thermostat with Alexa compatibility.

6



Amazon Echo Show 15

★★★★★ £240 / stuff.tv/EchoShow15

Amazon's smart display has come of age – this is easily the best Show in town.

7



Philips Hue Starter Kit

★★★★★ from £70 / stuff.tv/Hue

Become an indoor god with the smartest way of lighting up your home remotely.

8



Dyson V15 Detect Absolute

★★★★★ £600 / stuff.tv/V15Absolute

Ludicrous but brilliant: a vacuum cleaner that illuminates your dust particles with a laser.

9



Facebook Portal+

★★★★☆ £349 / stuff.tv/PortalPlus

Not the smartest display around, but a brilliant choice if you're after a screen for video calls.

10



Nest Doorbell (Battery)

★★★★☆ £155 / stuff.tv/NestDoorbell

A simple gadget that makes it easy to answer the door when you can't answer the door.

1

HOT
BUY

Oculus Quest 2

from £299 / stuff.tv/Quest2

The original Quest felt almost too good to be true. Its successor lacks the same wow factor, but you can't argue with a better display and processor – not to mention a lighter, more comfortable build – for less money. Are there more powerful headsets? Is motion sickness still an issue? Yes to both, but superb tracking and a total absence of wires make this the VR package to get... that is, unless you're boycotting Facebook, because you have to be logged in to use it.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Not a complete reinvention, but our favourite VR headset is now even better... and cheaper!

1

HOT
BUY

GoPro Hero10 Black

£330 / stuff.tv/H10B

At a glance it's almost impossible to tell the Hero10 Black apart from its predecessor. Each is a little box with screens front and rear, and a lens housing that juts out. Under the hood, however, GoPro has truly levelled up its latest action camera – and much of that is down to the new GP2 processor. It's more responsive and captures better images in all lighting conditions, while 'nice to have' features (better livestreaming and webcam support, faster wireless and wired transfer of video) iron out some old issues.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Beefed-up internals make the Hero10 Black a nippy, powerful, polished action cam

2



Valve Index

£919 / stuff.tv/ValveIndex

While not revolutionary, the Index carries enough subtle upgrades to put it atop the PC-based headset pack. Everything looks fabulous and the controllers deliver the most fluid-feeling VR interactions to date.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

The best of the performance-PC VR options

2



DJI Air 2S

£865 / stuff.tv/Air2S

DJI's laurels remain assuredly un-rested-upon, and this may be its best drone yet: an almost perfect balance of portability, performance and price, ideal for novices but still able to produce high-on-pro-level results.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The best all-round camera drone on the market

3



HTC Vive Pro

£449 (headset only) / stuff.tv/HTCVivePro

No longer the top dog for high-end VR using a PC, the Vive Pro – launched way back in 2018 – remains a strong headset thanks to its crisp screens and comfy fit. But see also the upgraded Pro 2 model.

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

Impressive, but not the best around any more

NEW

3



DJI Mini 3 Pro

£709 / stuff.tv/Mini3Pro

Like the old Mini 2, this little quadcopter is light enough to avoid having to be registered with the CAA yet still grabs stellar aerial video. It's a user-friendly compact drone that doesn't compromise on performance.

Stuff says ★★★★★

DJI's latest dinky drone produces great images

4



HTC Vive Flow

★★★★☆ £499 / stuff.tv/ViveFlow

The VR is decent, but the 'travel-friendly' part faces some obstacles.

4



DJI Mavic 3

★★★★★ £1729 / stuff.tv/Mavic3

It isn't cheap, but DJI's stunning flagship raises the bar for foldable flying cameras.

5



PlayStation VR

★★★★☆ from £170 / stuff.tv/PSVR

Held back by niggling issues... let's hope the upcoming PlayStation VR2 will fix those.

5



Fimi X8 Mini

★★★★☆ £357 / stuff.tv/X8Mini

A pocket-friendly flying machine with convincing camera skills.

1

HOT BUY



Fujifilm X-T4

£1549 / stuff.tv/XT4

The Fuji X-T4 might be the high-end mirrorless camera of your dreams. Relatively affordable for a flagship, it excels at stills and video thanks to in-body image stabilisation, high-speed shooting and 4K recording at up to 60fps. Rapid shooting is backed up by fancy AF tricks that feel equally fast and reliable, and even the battery life goes above and beyond the usual standards. There's no doubting this is a worthy successor to the already fabulous X-T3.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A superbly capable mirrorless camera for shooting pretty much anything in style



● NOW ADD THIS

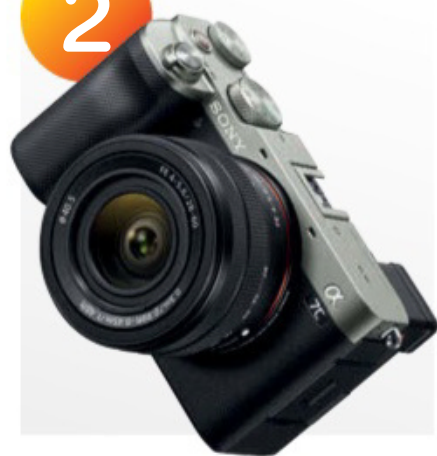
Fujifilm XF 16-80mm f/4

This versatile lens covers a bigger zoom range than most and adapts to pretty much any requirements. £699 / wexphotovideo.com

TIPS & TRICKS

- It's easy to set up the X-T4's customisable Q button: just hold it down for a couple of seconds for options.
- Avoid those wonky horizons by turning on the built-in on-screen level in screen settings.
- Fujifilm X Acquire is a clever bit of PC/Mac software that backs up all your X-T4's custom settings.

2



Sony A7C

£1699 / stuff.tv/A7C

Putting full-frame sensors in small bodies is one of Sony's greatest strengths, and the A7C minimises things even further. It stuffs a lot of imaging power into a compact package with plenty of battery life; for photo and video geeks in need of a body they can carry in a small bag, this fits the bill better than any other interchangeable-lens camera around. It isn't a budget model by any means, but it isn't a starter job either – it's an enthusiast camera, capable of producing stunning photos and videos.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Superb quality and full-frame goodness from a half-pint camera

3



Sony A7 III

£1699 / stuff.tv/SonyA7iii

The A7 III manages to pack in a lot of tech and desirability for less than £2000. You get a full-frame 24.2MP sensor, a super-whizzy Bionz X processor, 10fps shooting, a hybrid AF system, a 2.3m-dot EVF and a 3in 922k-dot tilting LCD touchscreen. It's a fantastic all-rounder that's suited to a bunch of shooting scenarios, coping well with landscapes, portraits and even a little bit of high-speed sport work. It's not the prettiest thing we've ever seen, but it handles well for its compact size.

Stuff says ★★★★★

An excellent all-round shooter that thrives in low-light conditions

4



Nikon D780

★★★★★ £2299 / stuff.tv/D780

An all-round DSLR that's built like a tank and borrows the best tricks of its mirrorless siblings.

5



Canon EOS R6

★★★★★ £2399 / stuff.tv/EOSR6

With its low-light-friendly specs, the R6 all but guarantees sharp shots in any conditions.

6



Canon EOS RP

★★★★★ £1050 / stuff.tv/EOSRP

A full-frame mirrorless marvel that's light enough to not be a burden and offers top picture quality.

7



Sony A1

★★★★★ £6499 / stuff.tv/A1

There are better options for specialists, but this is the ultimate no-compromise all-round camera.

8



Panasonic Lumix GH6

★★★★★ £1999 / stuff.tv/GH6

This superb Micro Four Thirds camera is easily Panasonic's best mirrorless yet for video.

9



Fujifilm GFX100S

★★★★★ £5499 / stuff.tv/GFX100S

Not cheap, but lightweight and compact: Fuji has made medium-format accessible.

10



Sony ZV-E10

★★★★★ £679 / stuff.tv/E10

With lots of inputs, decent mics and strong 4K performance, this is a great-value vlogging tool.

● System camera prices quoted are for body only unless otherwise stated

1

HOT
BUY

Amazon Echo Dot (4th Gen)

from £50 / stuff.tv/Dot

This fabric-covered take on Marvin the paranoid android in disguise as a Magic 8-Ball feels playful yet classical. It can't match a full-size smart speaker for audio, but as a little radio and an Alexa assistant for the bedside table or kitchen worktop, this cutie gets the job done. It's worth paying £10 more for the 'with Clock' version, which adds extra functionality beyond telling the time.

Stuff says ★★★★★

With the optional clock, this is our favourite bedside wondergadget



● NOW ADD THIS Sportlink Wall Mount

This minimalist acrylic mount for the Dot will keep it clear from wet surfaces in the bathroom or kitchen. £8 / amazon.co.uk

TIPS & TRICKS

- Fed up of yelling? Alexa's voice can work like an intercom with connected Echo devices.
- Alexa Voice Shopping lets you order from Amazon; add a 'voice code' to keep the kids off.
- Dot at your bedside? Saying "Alexa, turn on whisper mode" will stop it waking up sleepyheads.

2



Microsoft Xbox Wireless Headset

£90 / stuff.tv/XboxHeadset

With their chunky earpads, these black cans are unmistakably Xbox. And the sound is impressive for the price, with a low-end response so impactful we had to turn down the bass in the Xbox's EQ app. You might find yourself wishing for some sort of multifunction button for non-gaming use (and there's no case, suggesting Microsoft expects you to keep it in the house). But if you like the sound of keeping your Xbox headset outlay below three figures, look no further.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Yes, you really can bag a decent gaming headset for under £100

3



Amazon Kindle Paperwhite

£130 / stuff.tv/Paperwhite

With this redesigned and markedly improved Paperwhite, Amazon's e-reader dominance looks sure to continue. The bigger display is worth the added heft, while the warm light setting means the gap between this and the pricey Oasis has never been smaller. The new interface gets a thumbs-up too... that is, providing you're happy to buy all your books from Amazon, because it doesn't make it easy to read from other sources. More than ever, the Paperwhite is the Kindle to go for.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The evolved Paperwhite remains the best Kindle for almost everyone

4



SanDisk Extreme 1TB

★★★★★ £115 / stuff.tv/Extreme

A rugged little SSD for those who don't just need a drive to dump next to their desktop.

5



Raspberry Pi 400 Kit

★★★★★ £101 / stuff.tv/Pi400

This DIY PC kit is a superb gadget for hacking around and exploring computing's past.

6



Orange Crest Edition

★★★★★ £95 / stuff.tv/OrangeCrest

Comfortable cans with a sound that's true to Orange's hard-rocking heritage.

7



Ultimate Ears Wonderboom 2

★★★★★ from £70 / stuff.tv/Wonderboom2

A rugged little wonder that'll bring a sonic boost to any occasion.

8



SureFire Gaming Bunker 1TB

★★★★☆ £105 / stuff.tv/Bunker

Dead consistent performance makes this a headache-free gaming SSD.

9



Poco M4 Pro

★★★★☆ £195 / stuff.tv/M4Pro

Skips a few luxuries, but still a seriously good Android phone for the price.

10



Beurer TL50

★★★★☆ £80 / stuff.tv/TL50

A beautifully designed anti-SAD lamp that doesn't cost the earth.

E-VILLE

**EXPERIENCE.
E-VOLVE. E-VILLE.**

STRAIGHT FROM ST. PAULI



Stuff

ULTIMATE LAPTOP BUYING GUIDE

Notebooks for every
budget, from ultra-
cheap portables to
premium 2-in-1s

EXPERT ADVICE TO GET THE
MOST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

35 OF THE BEST
LAPTOPS TO
BUY TODAY

PLUS!

Ideal on-the-go accessories
What to look for when in store
Top gaming powerhouses
The best of Chrome OS

Stuff
25
YEARS

Backlit
gaming
heroes

Extra
screen
space

Mid
market
marvels

The
best
Macs

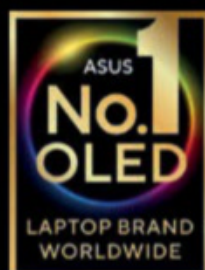




ASUS

Presenting the new **ASUS ZenBook Pro 14 Duo OLED**

The most captivating 120hz OLED display on a 14inch laptop



HELLO!



Choosing a laptop can be harder than baking one of those clever rainbow cakes without a recipe – there are just so many ingredients slopping around the bowl and you need to consider them all. So unless you have your heart set on a particular model, there are plenty of questions. What processor to go for? Should you get a Mac or a PC? Will 4GB of memory be enough? (The answer to that last one is no.) And why does Intel still have a processor called a Pentium when it's a brand-new chip?

The main thing to decide first of all is how much to spend: what can you afford, and what's right for your needs? There's no point splashing a couple of grand on a premium laptop if all you need is to go online, watch *Doctors* on iPlayer and dabble with the occasional spreadsheet for your bridge club's accounts. A laptop should suit what you need to do – it sounds obvious, but it's true.

And, of course, that's why we're here. We've gone into much more detail about how to choose your ideal laptop overleaf. Then it's on to our selection of devices, akin to choice cuts from the top counter – we've ordered our selection by price range, with budget choices, mid-rangers, premium powerhouses, gaming monsters and finally a selection of Google-powered Chromebooks. Enjoy choosing your next laptop!

Dan Grabham, Editor-in-Chief / @dangrabham



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MAKING STUFF UP

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HOW TO CHOOSE

There are too many laptops. So before you go haring off into the lappy labyrinth, let's try to narrow down your search a little...

When you're looking for a laptop, sometimes you can have too much of a good thing: with so many different shapes, sizes and specifications to choose from, it can all seem a little overwhelming. The good news is that **Stuff** is here to help.

Rather than start wading through endless laptop listings online, the best way to choose a new machine is to ask yourself two questions. The first is: "What do I want to do with it?" And the second, just as important, is: "What might I want to do with it a year from now?"

So for example, if you're sure you're only going to use a laptop for surfing on the sofa, doing a bit of online shopping and staying on top of your social media, you don't need a state-of-the-art ultra-portable ultra-light piece of precision engineering. And conversely, if you fancy having a go at video editing – or might do soon – then a really cheap option isn't going to do the job.

Ahead over heels

Price is important, of course, but thinking long-term is a good idea because laptops are really not designed to be opened up and upgraded – so opting for a cheap laptop with very small storage means you might have to shell out for an external drive; or going for a too-small screen might be a corner you'll later regret cutting. So if you can spend a bit of time thinking about the apps you want to use (or games you want to play), where you're going to be using them and what features are most important to you, you'll find that narrows down your search considerably.

And if the perfect laptop is just a little bit too expensive, don't despair: you can pick up older models for considerably less, and many manufacturers' refurbished laptops are available on eBay in near-perfect condition for very low prices. Recent laptops are so powerful that a model from a few years ago will still have lots of life in it.

WHICH SYSTEM IS BEST FOR YOU?



APPLE MACOS

Apple makes arguably the best laptops you can buy – and because it creates the hardware, the software and the processors, these machines can deliver a level of refinement and integration between hardware and software – as well as working seamlessly with other Apple devices, plus iCloud services such as Apple Music, iCloud Drive and Apple TV+ – that rival manufacturers simply cannot provide. However, that comes at a cost: Apple makes premium products and that means it charges premium prices, with even its cheapest laptops costing considerably more than similarly powerful Windows machines. Yes, they are worth the money, but it is quite a lot of money.



GOOGLE CHROME OS

Chromebooks run Chrome OS, Google's lean and speedy operating system based on the Chrome web browser. Although Chromebooks do have storage and can run apps locally, they're really designed to be used with cloud-based apps such as Google Docs, Google Sheets, Gmail, YouTube and so on. Because Chrome is so lightweight it doesn't need as much horsepower as Apple or Windows PCs, and because most of the heavy lifting is done by Google's servers your Chromebook won't slow down over time. There are some great high-spec Chromebooks but we prefer the more basic ones: they're impressively speedy, portable and great value.



MICROSOFT WINDOWS

Windows 10 and Windows 11 laptops are the choice of business users and gamers too: with a huge variety of options, from cheap and cheerful PCs to powerful workstations and laptops that can be twisted and folded into all kinds of useful shapes, there's a Windows option for every kind of user and for every budget. But some of the really cheap ones are underpowered and/or stingy with storage, and all that choice can be quite confusing when it comes to deciding which one to buy: do you want an Intel or an AMD processor? A Celeron or a Core i5? Don't panic: if you do a little bit of research and check out reviews, it's possible to configure the perfect PC.



...OR JUST A TABLET?

Tablets aren't laptops, we know. But many of the best tablets, such as Apple's iPads and Samsung's Galaxy Tabs, can become very laptop-like with the addition of the right keyboard. If you already have a high-quality tablet that's a cheap way to upgrade to a laptop-type experience; and while even the most powerful tablets don't multitask as well as proper computers (although they're getting better and there are big changes coming to the iPad operating system this autumn), they're great for working on the move. You can also use additional accessories such as an Apple Pencil for a more paper-like writing or drawing experience, and the battery life is often spectacular. See p80 for our top five.

Acer
Swift 1
p94

Top five
tablets
p80

Asus
CX9400
p108

Apple
MacBook Pro
p103

ESSENTIAL SPECS

DISPLAY QUALITY

If you're going to be spending a lot of time in front of your laptop's screen, make sure it's big enough, bright enough and crisp enough for the apps you want to use. The very cheapest laptops tend to have darker, less vivid displays, and for photography or writing you might regret compromising.

STORAGE AND MEMORY

64GB of storage might sound like a lot, but some of us have photo libraries of four times that. Think about how much space you need now and what you might need in future: games, phone photos and video need lots of storage, and heavy-duty apps need plenty of memory.

GRAPHICS

You don't need a powerful graphics card for Facebook, Amazon and emailing. But if you plan to play games or edit video, you'll want something a bit more hefty than the graphics systems in the most affordable laptops. Again, think long-term: if it's just about adequate now, it might not be in a year.

PORTABILITY

Some laptops are more portable than others – and the more moving around you do, the more this matters.

That 17in display might look brilliant, but you'll struggle to open it in an economy airline seat; and that high-powered laptop will feel like a lump of lead after a few hours in a shoulder bag.

Teen age quiet

This is a totally fanless laptop. And as there's also no mechanical drive it will be near enough 100% silent, unless you're unlucky enough to get one with a bit of coil whine.

Rather tipped

The Swift 1 has a fingerprint scanner pad next to the keyboard, to let you unlock the laptop without using your PIN or password. But beware: budget sensors tend to be extremely flaky.

Silver sockets

With a couple of classic USBs, one USB-C and a chunky-boy HDMI port, the Swift 1 has better connectivity than lots of high-priced laptops. No adapters needed... unless you want to plug in an SD card.



BUDGET

Save your money: a cheap laptop doesn't need to look or run like a slug

Acer Swift 1

from £300 / stuff.tv/Swift1

If you want an affordable laptop but don't want to be whacked over the head by its cheapness whenever you fire the thing up, get an Acer Swift 1. It has three things you don't often see in laptops this affordable, and they all count.

The first is display quality. Sure, it won't challenge a MacBook but you get a Full HD 14in IPS panel that's 35% brighter than some other low-end models. This matters a lot if you want to use it anywhere other than indoors at home.

Secondly, it's not the chunky laptop you might imagine when spending this little: at just 15mm thick and roughly 1.3kg, its portable cred is as solid as laptops three times the price.

And it even has an aluminium shell. Acer has always managed to churn out some of the most affordable metal laptops, but we are still impressed you can get that hard, cool-to-the-touch feel at this price.

Can you see the 'but' coming over the hill? The Swift 1 is just not that powerful. You have a choice between Celeron and Pentium Silver CPUs, and neither is a match for Intel's famous Core chips.

For all its design panache, a Swift 1 is best suited to those who only need the basics. High-end models can get pricey too, making £400 the sweet spot.

Key specs

- 14in 1920x1080
- Intel Celeron / Pentium Silver
- 4-8GB RAM
- 64-512GB SSD
- Windows 11 Home
- 15hr battery
- 323x212x15mm, 1.3kg

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★☆

This is what cheap laptops should be like



Samsung Galaxy Book Go 4G

This isn't a laptop we'd recommend to everyone, but it has something you won't see almost anywhere else: a SIM slot, meaning you can get online virtually anywhere as long as you treat it to a data plan. It's a bit slow and the screen is dim, but battery life is excellent. **from £399 / samsung.com**



Dell Inspiron 15 3515

Take a double serving of meat and potatoes, puree it with a hand blender and use it to sculpt a laptop... and you'd get something like this. It's a plain machine and its 15.6in screen is no portability dream. But the Ryzen 5 chipset and 8GB of RAM are ready for much tougher jobs than the cheapest laptops can handle. **£449 / dell.com**



Asus X415

The Asus X415 is one of the best performance-per-pound laptops. Even the lowest-end version has a Pentium Gold processor, the perfect match for those who can't afford to jump into the CPU big leagues. The design isn't going to get pulses racing and the display isn't too bright, but this one's all about performance. **from £250 / asus.com**



Microsoft Surface Go 3

Microsoft's cheapest Surface blows ordinary budget laptops away in terms of build quality, speaker power, display colour and brightness. It's slicker than any affordable 360°-hinged hybrid too. Bear in mind you will need to buy the stick-on keyboard separately (£100), and the base model only has a paltry 64GB of storage. **from £349 / microsoft.com**

**NOW
ADD
THESE...**



WESTERN DIGITAL MY PASSPORT 1TB

Cheaped out on storage? No problem, just get an external hard drive: dead slow, but dirt cheap. **£53 / westerndigital.com**



LOGITECH G203 LIGHTSYNC

Give your setup a bit more pizzazz with a light-up mouse. With its customisable light strip, this one isn't as tacky as that sounds. **£22 / logitech.com**



CREATIVE PEBBLE V3

Most laptop speakers suck. All cheap laptop speakers suck. These cute little orbs fix that problem in stereo. **£30 / uk.creative.com**

**BUYING
ADVICE**

SCREEN CANDIDATES

Good budget laptop screens are Full HD and have IPS panels. Some cheapo models still have TN screens. These can look awful, particularly when viewed from an angle.

RAM IT WITH RAM

Want to do anything beyond browsing and streaming? Get a laptop with 8GB of RAM and either an Intel Core or an AMD Ryzen CPU. More cash, but you won't regret it.

BE STOREY, NOT SORRY

If you want to install apps or games, 128GB should be the absolute minimum storage to go for. Don't forget Windows is going to eat up its share before you even turn it on.

THE REPUBLIC OF INNOVATION

Asus has long been at the forefront of laptop technology... and its 2022 range shows no signs of slowing down

A sus is one of the biggest and most innovative names in the laptop game, and there's plenty of evidence of that in its incredible 2022 range.

You'll find vibrant OLED displays on machines that cater to every budget, and the new Republic Of Gamers notebooks are portable powerhouses to satisfy every gaming fan.

Zen came you

Examine the latest Zenbook portables and you'll find a machine for you – no matter what you need from your next notebook.

Take the Zenbook Pro 14 Duo OLED. As the name suggests, you'll find next-generation display technology here, with the 8K 120Hz OLED panel sitting above a 12.7in touchscreen. The main display has crisp, smooth visuals, a cinema-grade DCI-P3 colour gamut and Pantone validation,

while the secondary screen offers precise touch and stylus control.

Combine those screens with the latest 12th-gen Intel Core i9 processors and powerful Nvidia GeForce RTX 3050 Ti graphics, and you've got a laptop built for the most demanding creatives.

If that's not enough, consider the Zenbook Pro 16X OLED, which has a 4K OLED HDR screen with VESA True Black 500 certification alongside the latest Intel and Nvidia hardware – it's the most powerful Zenbook ever.

And Zenbooks aren't just for creators: see also the Zenbook S range of laptops, perfect for people who demand lightweight all-day excellence.

The Zenbook S 13 OLED is the world's lightest 13.3in OLED notebook, thanks to a 1kg chassis, while the Zenbook S 13 Flip OLED adds a 360° ErgoLift hinge.

The Zenbook Pro series brings high-quality OLED touchscreens

to the party: the 15.6in Flip includes Intel's new Arc A370M graphics core, while the 17in model has GeForce graphics and Harman Kardon-certified speakers.

The innovation continues beyond Zenbooks. New laptops like the Vivobook 13 Slate include OLED displays and limited-edition designs created by renowned artists. Elsewhere you can discover Vivobook Pro machines that use top-tier Nvidia graphics and Vivobook S laptops with OLED NanoEdge 4K screens.

Flow your mind

There's no shortage of innovation in the latest Republic Of Gamers laptops either. The newest addition to the family is the Flow X16 – the world's most powerful convertible gaming laptop.

As well as traditional laptop gaming, you can flip the Flow into tent mode to use a controller or use the touchscreen in tablet mode. Under the hood you've got the latest Nvidia and AMD hardware, and the 16in Mini LED display pairs cinematic colours with Dolby Atmos audio.

Want a convertible but smaller? The ROG Flow X13 is a 13in beast with 120Hz and 4K display options, liquid metal cooling and GeForce RTX 3050 Ti graphics, while the Flow Z13 crams similar hardware inside a machine with a detachable tablet screen.

All these Flow laptops support the innovative Asus ROG XG Mobile graphics dock, so you can easily add power and ports.

It's this kind of dedication to engineering that makes Asus the global leader for gaming on the go. In fact, whether you're a gamer, a creator or a box-set binger, Asus has you covered.

Find out more at [asus.com](https://www.asus.com)

N-key day now

The Asus ROG Flow X16 is arguably the world's most versatile gaming laptop. Its keyboard has n-key rollover and it connects seamlessly with wireless controllers.



Nits a sin

The Zenbook Pro 16X OLED's 4K display has a creator-friendly 16:10 aspect ratio and 550-nit peak brightness, and gets the thumbs-up from colour experts Pantone for accuracy.

STUFF PROMOTION ◆◆◆◆



Specs on fire

The Pro 16X OLED can be specced with GeForce RTX 3060 graphics, Core i9-12900H mobile processors, DDR5 memory and PCIe 4 SSDs. And it has Wi-Fi 6E.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS...



RAISE IT UP

Open the latest Zenbook and Zephyrus Duo laptops and you'll see some inventive design smarts: the hinge lifts the base, so hot air can easily escape the underside of the machine, and also tilts keyboards and second screens towards the user for better ergonomics.



COOL IT DOWN

Asus engineers work tirelessly to ensure their creations work flawlessly. In the ROG Flow gaming laptops, for instance, you'll find a Pulsar heatsink coursing with liquid metal and a Frost Force thermal module that directs air through channels in the chassis.

A bind of magic

The quality 16.1in display is a major factor in making TV and films that bit more immersive... and thanks to slim borders, this laptop still easily fits in bags made for 15-inches.

Flash(y)

Aluminium is the easiest way to class-up a mid-range laptop, and Honor has scads of the stuff. The entire shell is metal, bar the screen surround, making this look like a flagship PC.

Fat-bottomed grilles

Great big grilles on each side of the keyboard announce the speakers, which point right up at your bonce. Don't expect miracles, though, as these sound like typically mediocre laptop speakers.

MID-RANGE *pt1*

Get 85% of the good stuff for 60% of the cash with a 'sensible' option

Honor MagicBook 16

£800 / stuff.tv/MB16

Honor probably isn't the first name to come to mind when you think of laptops. But that is exactly why you should consider the MagicBook 16.

Let us explain. Honor has made laptops since 2018, but this relationship is still in its honeymoon period: we don't know about each other's bad habits and Yu-Gi-Oh! card collections yet. And so, anxious to impress us, Honor is packing its laptops with more power, more RAM and more storage than most of the competition.

This is a 16.1in laptop with a full aluminium shell, begging you to draw comparisons with Apple's MacBook Pro 16in. It has 16GB RAM and a generous 512GB SSD too... and the closest MacBook Pro to those specs will set you back over £2000.

The two aren't really equals, of course, but Honor weaves a pretty illusion here. The Ryzen 5600H processor is powerful enough for just about any job and the display has an ultra-smooth 144Hz refresh rate. The MagicBook 16 will easily replace a desktop PC for many.

Sure, it only has a 1080p screen and a plastic touchpad, and parts of the casing aren't flagship-grade stiff. But you could easily pay more and get less elsewhere.

Key specs

- 16.1in 1920x1080 ● AMD Ryzen 5
- 16GB RAM ● 512GB SSD
- Windows 11 Home ● 8hr battery
- 368x236x18.2mm, 1.84kg

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★☆

A fine mid-ranger with plenty to offer



Microsoft Surface Laptop Go 2

Paragon of tasteful reserve, this laptop feels a lot like a true high-end laptop thanks to its 12.4in touchscreen, low 1.13kg weight, great glass touchpad and quality keyboard. But if you want to do anything remotely serious, swerve the entry-level spec and demand 8GB of RAM. [from £529 / microsoft.com](https://microsoft.com)



Acer Swift 3 SF-316

Always a top pick for students and deal-seekers – put the Acer Swift 3 on your shortlist. This particular model has a giant 16.1in screen and an aluminium casing, and is still reasonably portable at 1.7kg. Those extra inches are a godsend for watching telly... but look out for the new 12th-gen Intel models. [from £800 / acer.com](https://acer.com)



Asus Vivobook Pro 15 OLED

More into entertainment than spreadsheets? This one is for you. It's one of the most affordable ways to get an OLED laptop, which deliver top contrast, brightness and vibrant colour. The funky sub-pixels will make text look fuzzier than an LCD with the same resolution, though. [from £899 / asus.com](https://asus.com)



HP Pavilion Aero 13

The Envy 13 is usually our number one mid-range pick from HP, but this one shakes things up. It's a 13.3in magnesium-shelled ultraportable that weighs under 1kg and still has a powerful Ryzen processor and 1600p screen. It really doesn't belong in the staid Pavilion line-up. [from £700 / hp.com](https://hp.com)

NOW ADD THESE...



UNIVERSAL AUDIO VOLT 276

Want to turn your laptop into a recording studio? Get an audio interface like this one. It has two inputs, ideal for podcasting duos. [£229 / uaudio.com](https://uaudio.com)



BEYERDYNAMIC DT 700 PRO X

You could buy standard wireless cans, but this wired studio pair delivers better sound per pound. [£249 / beyerdynamic.com](https://beyerdynamic.com)



LOGITECH MX MASTER 3S

An update to one of the best mice around: Logitech has reduced clicker noise by up to 90% and bumped resolution to 8000dpi. [£120 / logitech.com](https://logitech.com)

BUYING
ADVICE

XE HOW THEY RUN

Want to play games but don't want a laptop with a graphics card? Get one with Intel Xe integrated graphics. They can handle titles from the Xbox One/PS4 generation well.

RYZEN DON'T FALL

Windows laptops with AMD Ryzen CPUs typically last longer off a charge than Intel ones. That's at the expense of power, but with up to 16hrs of use we don't mind too much.

COMMIT TO MEMORY

Almost all mid-range laptops start off with 8GB RAM. Edit big photos or video? Have a thing for keeping 10,000 browser tabs open at once? Consider 16GB.

MID-RANGE *pt2*

Another five options that won't push you over the scary £1k mark

NOW
ADD
THESE...



CREATIVE T60

Fix your laptop's naff audio with these latest speakers from the long-running T-series. They have 2.75in drivers and multiple audio modes.

£70 / [creative.com](https://www.creative.com)



ELGATO FACECAM

The go-to webcam for buyers with a bit of cash to spend, the Facecam delivers a sharp picture and uses a Sony Starvis security camera sensor.

£150 / [elgato.com](https://www.elgato.com)



KNOMO HARPSDEN

This is a real looker of a backpack, and has a waterproof outer shell and zips to keep your 14in laptop safe even if it's weeing down.

£129 / [knomo.com](https://www.knomo.com)



Acer Vero

A laptop with better green credentials than most, the 15.6in Acer Vero is made (in part) using recycled plastics. The effect is nice enough – a mottled greeny-grey finish that's much more interesting than basic black – while 11th-gen Core processors deliver excellent day-to-day performance.

from £700 / [acer.com](https://www.acer.com)



HP Envy x360 13

This is one of our favourite classic flippy-hinge hybrid laptop series. It has a lovely aluminium body, a bright Full HD display and a choice of ultra-punchy Ryzen 5 and 7 processors. There's a 15in version too, but at that scale these hybrids can feel silly. No bundled stylus, but HP uses a substantial keyboard.

from £799 / [hp.com](https://www.hp.com)



Dell XPS 13 9305

Wait a minute, since when was the Dell XPS 13 a mid-price laptop? That's right, this classic design craftily snuck down a rung while Dell was preparing the eyebrow-raising XPS 13 Plus. It bears the usual carbon fibre and aluminium design, but comes in at £749. A steal, as long as you're happy with an 11th-gen Intel CPU.

from £749 / [dell.com](https://www.dell.com)



Apple MacBook Air (M1)

Apple doesn't really make affordable laptops, but the MacBook Air from 2020 just about sneaks in at under a grand. It may have already been superseded by the new M2-powered model, but it's still a portable smash. And even two years on, the M1 beats Intel's 12th-gen ultra-low-voltage CPUs.

from £949 / [apple.com](https://www.apple.com)

Lenovo Yoga Slim 7i Pro Gen 7

from £800 / [stuff.tv/7iPro](https://www.stuff.tv/7iPro)

The Yoga Slim 7i Pro is not an attention-grabbing laptop. It has one screen. The hinge doesn't let it perform the kind of acrobatics the 'Yoga' name suggests. But it delivers one thing only the very best mid-range laptops can: absolute certainty that your friends who spent £1500 on a style-led laptop are idiots.

First up, the shell is all-aluminium. It's cool to the touch and stiff enough to avoid flexing creaks. The screen is covered by a pane of glass that extends to the corners and the touchpad is smooth glass too. The keyboard is backlit and the 2.2K display zaps the pixellation of classic Full HD screens.

The Intel Core i5 chip is straight out of Intel's latest 12th-gen range – you can even upgrade to a Core i7 and an OLED display, while AMD Ryzen models with longer battery life but slightly worse gaming performance are also available.

OK, the weight is a bit above average and the speakers are only mediocre, but you could buy a pair of studio-quality monitors with the money saved.

Key specs

● 14in 2240x1400 / 2880x1800 ● Intel Core i5/i7 ● 8/16GB RAM ● 512GB/1TB SSD ● Windows 11 Home ● 17hr battery ● 312x221x15.6mm, 1.31kg

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Hits a price-point, misses the usual snags

BUYING
ADVICE

SIZE THINGS UP

13in and 14in are the best sizes for ultraportable use: big enough for comfy typing yet still trim. But even some slim-bezelled 16in models are OK to lug about a bit.

BREAK THE WINDOWS

Seen a laptop advertised as having Windows 10? Don't worry: Microsoft currently offers a free upgrade to 11, and it's also easy to do within Windows.

NIT ONE, PEARL ONE

Want a laptop you can use outdoors? 300-nit display brightness is the minimum you need; 400 nits or more is ideal. Makers often post this info on their websites.

**Inadvisable touch**

You'll find no touchscreen or 360° hinge here: this is pure old-school vibes. And if that makes this laptop sound like a grandad, it's definitely more Snoop Dogg (yes, he's got grandkids) than Clive Dunn.

Hand of confusion

Don't undervalue the importance of a glass touchpad. They feel much smoother than plastic ones, and are a big part of making a laptop feel, as well as look, like a classy contender.

Follow USB follow me

Around this price is where you start to see Thunderbolt 4 ports, with their super-fast transfer speeds. But Lenovo doesn't make you rely on them entirely as there's also one 'classic' USB.

Crackin' black

An OLED display means you get blacks deeper than a piece of bread that's been toasted for 2hrs. It covers the entire DCI-P3 colour gamut, and that's matched by the lower ScreenPad.

Touchpad too much

Yep, the touchpad is stuck over on the right-hand side. Bad news for lefties, and a good reason for everyone to pick up a mouse, unless you're happy to use the extra screen as a touchpad.

High way to quell

The lower screen creeps up a touch when you lift the lid. This isn't just for the ergonomic angle: the space beneath is used to pull in cool air from one side and blow hot air out the other.



HIGH END *pt1*

If only the best will do, make sure you bring a stack of banknotes

Asus Zenbook Pro 14 Duo OLED

from £2000 / stuff.tv/DuoOLED

Every now and then you see a laptop that makes you think, 'What on earth is that?' The Zenbook Pro 14 Duo OLED is one of those laptops.

After years spent tinkering with strange dual-screen machines, Asus has made this design seem more appealing than ever. It feels a lot like a two-monitor setup, but one you can easily stash in a rucksack.

When closed, the Zenbook Pro 14 Duo OLED looks like any slim laptop. Open it up and the second display glides up slightly, at an angle that's comfy for touchscreen or stylus use. You can fling apps from the top screen to the bottom one with a key tap, or turn it into a giant touchpad. Run Discord while playing a game, scroll Twitter while Zooming your nan, make it a bespoke control panel for Photoshop...

The keyboard is shifted right to the bottom so you'll need a palm rest, and battery life is rubbish unless you turn the ScreenPad display off. Clearly a Zenbook Pro 14 Duo OLED is not for everyone – but it's still an amazing piece of work.

Key specs

● 14.5in 2880x1800 + 12.7in 2880x864 touchscreens ● Intel Core i7/i9 ● 16/32GB RAM ● 512GB/1TB SSD ● Windows 11 Home ● 4hr battery ● 324x225x17.9mm, 1.7kg / 324x225x19.6mm, 1.75kg

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

A real powerhouse, despite the compromises



Apple MacBook Pro 14in

You may have caught wind of the new MacBook Air with Apple's M2 processor, but the MacBook Pros with M1 Pro and M1 Pro Max CPUs are still the most powerful models. Confusing, right? Just get ready to be blown away by the awesome speakers and the brightness when viewing HDR content.

from £1899 / apple.com



Lenovo Yoga 9i Gen 7

Lenovo's 360° Yoga hybrids have been around almost as long as iPads, but this is the first to have wrist-friendly ultra-rounded corners. The Yoga 9i has the breezy lifestyle bent that sometimes gets lost when laptops are too keen to impress. There's even a soundbar in the hinge, angled to fire at your face.

from £1015 / lenovo.com



LG Gram 14

About as close as you'll get to a high-concept series, LG's Gram laptops are light. Really light. The Gram 14 weighs under a kilo but still has loads of power, a good keyboard and more connections than almost any of its key rivals. A few parts aren't all that stiff, and the display is quite dull, but it's a portability dream.

from £1200 / lg.com



Dell XPS 13 Plus

The most daring update to this award-winning laptop series since it began: Dell's XPS 13 Plus has an invisible haptic touchpad and capacitive touch buttons above the keyboard. This is contentious space-age stuff, but thanks to Intel's 12th-gen processors it is ridiculously powerful for 1.23kg.

from £1299 / dell.com

NOW ADD THESE...



GIGABYTE AORUS RTX 3080 GAMING BOX V2

An eGPU enclosure can turn almost any laptop with Thunderbolt 3 or 4 into a monster gaming PC.

£990 / gigabyte.com



CALDIGIT TS4

A Thunderbolt dock supplies all the connectors modern high-end laptops typically lack. The CalDigit TS4 has 18 of the things.

£325 / caldigit.com



CHORD MOJO 2

This 8cm-wide magic box is an audiophile's dream. It's a DAC and headphone amp to radically upgrade the sound of any laptop.

£495 / chordelectronics.co.uk

BUYING
ADVICE

DEFINE YOUR NEEDS

Beware the 4K screen. They look fantastic but always have a big impact on battery life: that's four times as many pixels as a Full HD screen, each one sipping a little juice.

PLAY THE GAME

No matter what you've heard about the power of Apple's MacBooks, a Windows laptop is by far the better option for gaming. The platform has access to way more titles.

GIVE IT SOME PORT

High-end laptops often have barely any connectors. If portability matters, make peace with the fact that you may need to buy a USB-C hub to plug in peripherals.

HIGH END *pt2*

Get ready for round two of the most desirable laptops in the world

NOW
ADD
THESE...



ANYCUBIC KOBRA 3D

Get your dream laptop, then render your dreams with a 3D printer. This model sets new standards at under £300.

£290 / anycubic.com



Q ACOUSTICS M20 HD

These classy wireless active speakers pair beautifully with a laptop thanks to their USB input. A bargain.

£379 /

qacoustics.com



OPAL C1

A webcam that promises DSLR-like image quality, the C1 blows other options out of the water with its 4K sensor.

\$300 /

opalcamera.com



Asus Zenbook 14X OLED

Here's a cheaper way to get the clever ScreenPad trick of the Zenbook Pro 14 Duo OLED on the previous page. The latest version of the 14X OLED comes with a 4K screen and 12th-gen Intel silicon, but this 11th-gen model is still around, with its extra display tucked below the keyboard like a normal trackpad.

from £1099 / asus.com



Lenovo ThinkPad X1 Carbon

If you're a business 'thought leader' with deals to make and airport lounges to sit in, you want a ThinkPad X1 Carbon. The original draw of this series was its deep-dish keyboards; Lenovo has whittled them down over the years but you still get great typing and a tough, lightweight 14in laptop.

from £2025 / lenovo.com



Samsung Galaxy Book2 Pro 360

Samsung is out to prove 360° hybrids don't have to be a clunky mess when used as tablets. This one's just 11.5mm thick and weighs a fraction over 1kg, making it far trimmer and lighter than an iPad Pro 12.9in with the keyboard attached. Shame the screen is only 1080p resolution.

from £1099 / samsung.com



Huawei MateBook X Pro

Huawei phones may be a Google-free wash but Huawei laptops are not. This flagship model focuses on what makes classic laptops enjoyable to use: it has a beautiful 14.2in 3K screen, a satisfyingly keyboard, a massive haptic touchpad and an extra-loud six-speaker sound system.

from £1600 / huawei.com

Microsoft Surface Laptop Studio

from £1449 / stuff.tv/SLStudio

Microsoft's latest hinge-master is based on an idea introduced by the Surface Studio 2... which you might not have even heard of, because it starts at almost £5000. That machine is not for mere mortals, but the Surface Laptop Studio is.

The concept hinges on, well, the hinge. You can treat it like a normal laptop but the screen also pivots around a joint near its centre, letting it sit in positions other hybrids just can't hack. Want the classic 'tent' angle? You don't even need to flip it around. And the screen can sit flat without leaving the keyboard sitting awkwardly on the underside.

Microsoft's cooling system is extremely quiet under pressure and it's virtually impossible to block the fan outlets. Build quality is fantastic, but the Surface Laptop Studio does get mega-expensive if you want a dedicated graphics card. And there's one more drawback: timing. This laptop arrived just before Intel's 12th-gen CPUs did, meaning it's stuck with 11th-gen hardware. It's good, but the extra cores of the new stuff aren't to be sniffed at.

Key specs

- 14.4in 2400x1600
- Intel Core i5/i7
- 16/32GB RAM
- 256GB-2TB SSD
- Windows 11 Home
- 18hr battery
- 323x228x18.9mm, 1.82kg

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Smart hinge design, great screen and touchpad

BUYING
ADVICE

TAKE A LETTER

Intel's 12th-gen chipsets mess with the naming system once again. CPU names with an 'H' are the most powerful; 'U' are less so. 'P' means serious power that fits in slim shells.

TAKE IT TO THE MACS

After a while lagging behind, AMD and Intel have mostly caught up with Apple's processor power. But for long battery life, MacBooks still rule.

TAKE UP YOUR PEN

If you're interested in creating digital art, pay attention to whether a stylus-supporting laptop actually includes one. Lenovo usually does, Microsoft doesn't.

Caught a front

Magnets hold the bottom of the screen in place when you bring it forward, just above the keyboard. It can't hang out in mid-air, but the hinges feel just as slick as you'd expect from a Microsoft Surface.

Glittering prize

Nope, that's not an SD card slot – it's the port for the magnetic charger. Snag the cable and it pops out, rather than pulling the whole machine off the table and onto your parquet flooring.

Alive and clicking

This is a haptic touchpad, meaning the click feedback isn't supplied by mechanical elements but by a motor. It takes up less space and means you can alter the feel of the pad.



Strike up the fanned

You can't see 'em, but four fans inside the case draw cool air in and blow hot air out. Copper highways direct heat away from virtually every component of the laptop that you don't touch.

Thrummertime

Real effort is put into the speaker array – a gaming laptop rarity. There are two woofers and two tweeters, and Dolby Atmos processing draws greater depth and separation from them.

Porgy and press

Opt for the Cherry MX mechanical upgrade and you'll have quite possibly the best keyboard available in a gaming laptop. Either way you're getting per-key customisable lighting.

GAMING

Clear a space for one of these in your putrid RGB-glowing cave

Alienware x17 R2

from £1977 / stuff.tv/x17

Buying an Alienware gaming laptop can seem a bit like getting a personalised numberplate for your car.

It says you have more money than sense and a deficit of taste, right?

The Alienware x17 R2 shows there's a lot more to it than that. This is a masterclass in gaming laptop design... and while few can afford what Alienware offers, you'll wish you could. We're talking about £2700 to hit the good stuff, and it can be specced up to drain over £4000 from your wallet. But if gaming is life, you can't do much better.

It matches the best available laptop GPUs with an advanced cooling system that lets you make good use of them. It's available with a great Cherry MX mechanical keyboard, and even the standard Alienware keys feel better than most. Its touchpad is smooth glass, and most of the connectors are round the back for tidiness.

Have enough cash to splash and you can choose between a pin-sharp 4K display or an ultra-responsive 360Hz 1080p one. There's a cheaper 165Hz 1080p display too, but at that point you might as well head elsewhere and get a more approachable model with a higher pixel count.

Key specs

- 17.3in 3840x2160 / 1920x1080
- Intel Core i7/i9 ● 16-64GB RAM
- 512GB-4TB SSD ● Nvidia GeForce RTX 3060 / 3070 Ti / 3080 Ti ● 4hr battery
- 399x300x21mm, 3.03kg/3.20kg

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Glides through games with all settings maxed



Acer Nitro 5

A good option if you're on a tighter budget: the Nitro 5's whole deal is about packing in the best components at an aggressive price. You still get a high refresh rate, excellent gaming power if you choose the right spec and a cooling system that can keep up. Display colour is weaker than the top dogs, mind.

from £699 / acer.com



Razer Blade 15

This here is the sleekest of all performance-driven gaming laptops. It's pricey and the 17mm skinniness means it runs pretty hot, but the power Razer crams into this shell is really impressive. The design hasn't changed much in years, but it still holds up. And the latest version has an improved 1080p webcam.

from £2600 / razer.com



Lenovo Legion 5i Pro

Is this the sweet spot? The Legion 5i Pro doesn't cost a bomb but has a well-saturated 16in screen with a high 165Hz refresh rate. For less than the starting cost of one of those show-offs you can nab an RTX 3070 GPU, 1TB SSD and 16GB RAM. Sorted. The design doesn't scream 'gamer', but that might be a good thing.

from £1360 / lenovo.com



Asus ROG Zephyrus G14

The original G14 blew minds back in 2020: a true gaming laptop almost as portable as a MacBook Pro. This latest version uses AMD hardware throughout, which lets the battery last far longer than the average gaming laptop. We're talking all-day use rather than 3-4hrs. Just one drawback: the G14 runs hot.

from £1699 / asus.com

NOW ADD THESE...



XBOX WIRELESS CONTROLLER

We love an underdog, but Microsoft's own Xbox pad is the single best quality-to-cost PC controller. Bluetooth latency is minimal.

£55 / xbox.com



FANATEC DD

This is the most badass racing wheel that doesn't cost as much as a car. It has direct drive force feedback for ace responsiveness.

from €700 / fanatec.com



THRUSTMASTER T.FLIGHT FULL KIT X

Gawd bless Microsoft Flight Simulator for bringing nerdy joysticks back into the spotlight.

£160 / thrustmaster.com

BUYING ADVICE

PLAY YOUR CARD RIGHT

Prioritise getting a better graphics card over a faster CPU. It will make a much bigger difference, particularly when all true gaming laptops now have powerful CPUs.

PICK MORE PIXELS

Not buying budget? Aim to get a screen above 1080p (but not necessarily 4K). Apps look better, and smart upscaling means you won't need a killer GPU for games.

WEIGHT FOR IT

Thin and light gaming laptops may seem appealing, but they often use smaller fans with a more distracting high-pitched tone, run hotter and have lower-powered GPUs.

CHROMEBOOKS

Hate Windows? Detest Apple? Here's your Google-based opt-out...

NOW
ADD
THESE...



8BITDO PRO 2 WIRED CONTROLLER

Android app support makes Chromebooks ideal for casual and retro gaming. Just add this ergonomic pad.
£29 / 8bitdo.com



ANKER POWERCORE III ELITE 19200

Most Chromebooks charge over USB-C these days, so you can recharge them using a power bank.
£90 / anker.com



LOGITECH SIGNATURE M650

This petite mouse has a near-silent clicker. It can be used with the included wireless dongle or over Bluetooth.
£40 / logitech.com



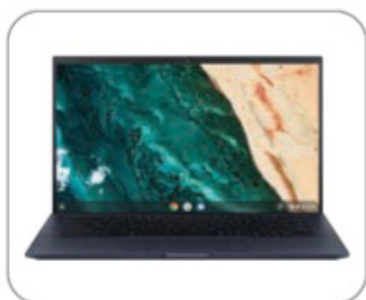
Acer Chromebook 515

This Acer leads Chrome OS into its next era: that of Steam gaming. It's one of just a handful of models that can run games from the platform as well as Android apps and games... if you get one with an Intel Core CPU. That's a big 'if', because the Pentium Gold version is a tempting option for other duties at just £299.
from £299 / acer.com



Lenovo IdeaPad Flex 3

Forget the expensive stuff; bargainous entry-level PCs are what Chrome OS should really be about. It's hard to beat the value on offer from this MediaTek-powered 11.6in 2-in-1, made to be used, abused and taken everywhere. The screen is only 720p but we don't mind at this size and at least it's IPS, not crappy TN.
from £250 / lenovo.com



Asus CX9400

That's right, Chromebooks can get their bling on too. Spending this much on Chrome OS is an odd move but Asus rewards you with a gorgeous aluminium design plus a Core i7 CPU, a 512GB SSD and 16GB RAM. Screen resolutions head up to 4K, but you're more likely to find the Full HD version here in the UK.
£1300 / asus.com



HP Chromebook X360 14c

Chromebooks with a 360° hinge can be had for peanuts, but this one shows what you get when you spend a bit more. It has a premium aluminium upper casing and lid, a high-quality keyboard and a clear Full HD screen. It gets spendy if you jump from Pentium Gold to Intel, mind.
from £349 / hp.com

Lenovo IdeaPad Duet 5 Chromebook

£449 / stuff.tv/Duet5

The Duet series is a bunch of hybrids where the screen has its own kickstand on a magnetised rear plate, and the keyboard is removable. It's like one of Microsoft's Surface models, but yes, it's a Chromebook. And unlike Microsoft, Lenovo bundles the keyboard. Score.

A hybrid Chromebook like this lets you take full advantage of the Android-style Chrome OS interface, which suits those who want to get away from the faff and complication of Windows. This is a fairly high-end model – one to act as your main PC if you only need to do the basics. It has a 13.3in screen, and what a screen it is: an OLED with per-pixel lighting for supreme contrast and pop.

It's also blessed with 256GB of storage. That's the norm for a decent Windows laptop, but feels like absolutely loads on a 'web first' Chromebook.

While the Snapdragon 7c Gen 2 CPU is hard work on Windows, it fits Chrome OS just fine – and helps the battery last an age. Chrome-friendly productivity and entertainment apps will run perfectly.

Key specs

● 13.3in 1920x1080 ● Snapdragon 7c Gen 2
● 8GB RAM ● 256GB eMMC ● Chrome OS
● 15hr battery ● 306x187x7.2mm, 700g (1kg with keyboard)

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Just a brilliantly flexible modular hybrid

BUYING ADVICE

STEAM UP

A handful of Chromebooks can now run Steam games. This is the best reason to buy one with a powerful CPU: only Intel Core i5 and i7 models are currently supported.

SHAPE UP

Chromebooks can come as standard laptops, as 360° hybrids or with detachable displays. Deciding which style you'd like first will help cut down your shortlist.

POWER DOWN

Before spending a fortune on a Chromebook, bear in mind big CPU power is wasted here. While they'll run Photoshop, for example, it's the same version you'd get on a phone.

Tone machine

The OLED screen fulfils 100% of the DCI-P3 colour gamut. For those not up with the nerd lingo, this means it offers deeper, richer, more vivid tones than virtually any other Chromebook.

Levitate free

The kickstand looks integrated but it's a separate part that sticks firmly to the back of the tablet using magnets. An ultra-thin hinge system then props the display up.

La la love blue

A blue fabric finish lends the kickstand cover and keyboard a soft look and feel. The back of the display is aluminium, supplying that cool and hard iPad-like vibe when you use the tablet part on its own.



MAC OR PC?

Should you embrace Apple's ecosystem or will Windows give you more dash for your cash?

The vast majority of laptops run either Apple's macOS or Microsoft's Windows. They aren't the only options – there's Linux for those who like to tinker, and Google's Chrome OS for lightweight, super-portable laptops – but they're by far the most popular. So which one is right for you?

The first and most important difference is that macOS is only available on Apple laptops. While Microsoft makes its own laptops in the form of the excellent Surface range, there are tons of companies making Windows PCs of every conceivable shape and size. And that has a significant effect on how much choice you have – as well as how much you're going to have to spend.

1 CHOICE AND COST

The cheapest Apple laptop is the MacBook Air, which starts at just under £1000. Large discounts on current-generation Apple products are very rare. By comparison, the cheapest Windows 11 laptop we could find on a big retailer's site was £209.

The two laptops are not remotely similar, of course, but it makes for a vivid illustration of the price difference between Apple and Windows laptops.

At the time of writing, Apple only makes two kinds of laptop: the MacBook Air and the more powerful and more expensive MacBook Pro. But for Windows laptops the choice is so wide you could spend a month scrolling through all the models available. There are specialised gaming laptops and laptops that turn into tablets, laptops that are tiny and light, and laptops that have massive screens and equally massive power.

IN EDUCATION, SOME APPS ARE WINDOWS ONLY... BUT MAC LAPTOPS CAN ALSO RUN MANY IPHONE AND IPAD APPS

2 OPERATING SYSTEM AND APPS

Apple's macOS used to be a much nicer operating system than its Microsoft rival, but Windows 10 and Windows 11 are vastly improved and genuinely pleasant to use. One area where Apple still has the edge is in its selection of free apps that come with every Mac: Pages, a word processor; Numbers, a spreadsheet tool; Keynote, a presentation app; GarageBand, for making music; and iMovie, for making and editing videos. These are all exceptionally good applications and they won't cost you a penny.

There certainly are some good free apps for Windows – and you can use online freebies such as Google Docs too – but you'll have to find them yourself.

Most of the big-name apps are available for both macOS and Windows, so if you're looking for the likes of Adobe Photoshop or Microsoft Office you can get them for both. But in education, you might find that specific apps such as stat-crunchers are Windows only. Conversely, current Mac laptops can also run many iPhone and iPad apps.

3 SECURITY AND CHILD SAFETY

Both Mac and PC have very good parental controls that make it easy to ensure your little ones don't see anything they shouldn't. In terms of security and malicious software such as computer viruses, Windows is much better and safer than it used to be, but we still recommend using anti-virus and anti-malware software for extra protection. You don't need such software on Macs.

4 ECOSYSTEMS

An ecosystem is the wider world to which your computer connects. For example, in the Apple ecosystem you can start a document on your Mac, pick it up on your iPhone and then do a bit more on your iPad. Apple's integration between its different devices is really impressive. Some PC firms offer similar options – Samsung and Lenovo are particularly good at this – but not to the same extent.

If you're on a tight budget, Windows definitely delivers better value – and there are some fantastic high-end Windows laptops too. But if you like Apple's way of doing things, you won't regret spending a bit more on a Mac.

OUR LOVES & HATES



APPLE'S APPS

Every Mac user gets a free suite of excellent software covering work, music and even filmmaking. You don't have to use Apple's apps, but we think you'll be surprised by just how good they are.



WINDOWS' CHOICE

Want a laptop that thinks it's a tablet, or one for gaming that has the world's most powerful graphics cards? Windows has you covered. The choice is incredible.



APPLE'S PRICES

The MacBook Air is worth every penny, but clearly an Apple laptop is going to be too expensive for many people. You can save some money by buying older models or refurbished ones.



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Divine HAMmer

The Amiga's visuals set it apart. The amusingly named HAM mode allowed 4096 colours in stills. Even Warhol dabbled: his Amiga disks were unearthed in 2014.



RANDOM ACCESS MEMORIES 1987

COMMODORE AMIGA 500

Amiga 500? What happened to the first 499? In the bin, while everyone used something better?

Ah, the hilarious 'Amiga is rubbish' jibe. But it took many years for this thing to be eclipsed by the PC. In the late '80s, Amiga owners didn't need to bang on about their pre-emptive multitasking smarts and how Amigas were used to craft special effects for *Babylon 5*. They already owned a machine with the raw power of a PC, and far greater visual and audio clout – for a fraction of the cost. At least they did once Commodore split the Amiga line in two, for pro and home users.

At which point it was clobbered by PCs and the Atari ST. The ST had MIDI, y'know!

We know. ST owners wouldn't shut up about it. But what they didn't know was that Atari could have had the Amiga themselves: it was invented by ex-Atari folks and the prototype was funded by the company, until it got distracted by a MIDI file or something. Commodore swooped in and, after a year claiming Amigas were business machines, changed tack so now the machines were mostly used for games (which were more colourful and smoother than ST titles)... most notably the seminal Amiga 500.

If the Amiga was so great, where is it now? Atari still exists...

Keep back or we'll be forced to bop you with a rolled-up copy of *Amiga Power* magazine. But yes, Commodore ceased to exist in 1994, having failed to capitalise on two of the most vital machines in computing's history, instead following a management strategy best described as cheerfully incoherent. Since then, approximately four billion different owners have plucked from the rotting flesh of the Amiga's corpse. Still, we'll always have *SWOS*, *Turrican II*, *Speedball 2* and *Stunt Car Racer*. (Sob.)

[Words Craig Grannell]

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